THE WIND AND THE RAIN

Founded by Michael Allmand

EDITED BY NEVILLE BRAYBROOKE

J. B. PICK
FRANCIS BERRY
ELIZABETH KING
W. GORE ALLEN
JACQUES MARITAIN
KAY CICELLIS
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HUGO MANNING
FRANÇOIS MAURIAC

WINTER, 1949-50

Volume VI Number 3

Quarterly **NINE** Two Shillings

A literary review demanding a more serious attitude towards the tradition

The second number will be on sale in January and includes:

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T. S. ELIOT'S The Cocktail Party	*Donald Bain*
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THE 'FORTIES AND THE FOURTH WALL

The State of the English Theatre

DRAMA in miniature has led to drama in a tea-cosy. From Wilde's comedies of manners to Coward's comedies of no manners has been one stage; from the vortex of the fallen angels of the 'twenties to the quiet week-ends of George and Margaret has been another. As the 'forties end and the 'fifties begin the information is made general that no London theatre can be found to house *The Cocktail Party* by T. S. Eliot. Playgoing still remains a luxury, not an artistic necessity: that is the difference between Paris and London, and it is a difference which Henry James once noted thus:

> The stage throws into relief the best gifts of the French mind, and the Théâtre Français is not only the most amiable but the most characteristic of French institutions. I often think of the inevitable first sensations there of the 'cultivated foreigner', let him be as stuffed with hostile prejudice as you please. He leaves the theatre an ardent Gallomaniac. This, he cries, is the civilized nation *par excellence*. Such art, such finish, such grace, such taste, such a marvellous exhibition of applied science are the mark of a chosen people. . . .

Admittedly James was writing of the last century, when the phrase 'English drama' meant the plays which were running in London; but the same is true to-day, for the term 'West End theatre' has become synonymous with modern English drama. Everything is centred upon some forty odd playhouses, divided amongst ten managements, seven of which are amalgamated. The danger of such centralization may be further emphasized when by contrast it is recorded that there are over two hundred publishers in London alone. It is little wonder if the young playwright is seldom given a chance.

Instead, by degrees a formula has been evolved. Before the first World War, showmanship was spectacle and spectacle was entertainment. One finds a comment to this effect in the July *Bystander* of 1905: 'A playgoer will pay out a large sum now and again to see a gorgeous production, but he feels he is being defrauded at paying the same amount for a mere comedy with a few people in it'. Indeed it was not until the cinema came into its own that such an attitude was abandoned, whilst in the meantime as the years passed the sets changed from the library and drawing-room to the most daring of all sets—the bedroom set. Acting was fast becoming a reputable profession; divorce was no longer unknown in the courts of Europe. Coward and Lonsdale were at the height of their powers. To-day all that remains is the mechanics of their tradition: the first sparkle has been lost. The plays of their successors (churned out to meet the needs of the different managements) resemble not photographs of society, but photographs of a photographer taking a photograph of a society which has faded. One has endless variations on situations like this:

He: Couldn't we start again? The old days. . . .
She: It's no good, Jonathan. We. . . .
He: You remember when we first met in Budapest. That little café by the Danube. The people dancing in the streets: their vagabond life, *our* vagabond life. Vagabond Kings we called ourselves. And do you remember that little man with a monkey sitting on his hurdy-gurdy. Our *own* royal musician we called him.
She: It's no good, Jonathan. The years have altered all that. Henry and I have settled down very well to the boredom of a marriage which has the air of a respectable affair. If you say any more, I shall be extremely angry.
He: My adorable, have another artichoke.
She: Jonathan, my child. You are still a boy. . . .

or this:

Colonel Prodjoy: I scent something, something funny here. (*A feminine giggle is heard from behind a screen*).
Jenkins: I assure you everything is in good order, Sir. You may rely upon me, Sir.
Colonel Prodjoy (*unconvinced*): You trying to play the giddy goat with me, Jenkins. Take that screen away. (*Mrs. Prodjoy is discovered in the arms of a stranger*). And whom may I ask is this? A member of the Women's Territorial Service, I suppose.
Jenkins: Some misunderstanding I think, Sir. Mr. Robinson is an official from the Ministry of Fuel and Power. He has come to make investigations about installing central heating in the castle.
Colonel Prodjoy: That will do, Jenkins. Mr. Robinson, you will have the goodness to step into the morning room with me. (*To Mrs. Prodjoy*). Tabitha, you will wait here. (*They exit*).
Mrs. Prodjoy (*alone*): Just when we were getting to know each other. Now we shall freeze under the Socialists for another year. I can't bear it. (*She begins to weep*). . . .

. . . and so on *ad infinitum*. The same stock scenes are re-written and re-played. Budapest of the 'thirties becomes Bolivia during the 'forties (there is safety in distance); the present official of the Ministry of Fuel and Power six or seven years back would have a sergeant of the Home Guard (obvious political allusions are always a safe bet). Again with the stock scenes come the stock properties: the milk-white bedside telephone, the Tudor panelling with its inset bookcases, the perpetual cigarettes by Abdulla; and then the stock openings: a butler crossing the stage to answer a bell, a maid dusting and waiting for the inevitable shout from the kitchen, a young girl in slacks reading the illustrated weeklies. These and other devices are the order of the day in Shaftesbury Avenue as they are in St. Martin's Lane and the Aldwych: nor does their realm end here.

An ordinary play takes approximately a hundred hours' rehearsal: a play at a weekly repertory theatre is lucky if it is given sixteen hours' rehearsal—and, because of this system, producers have neither the time nor the inclination to work out new plays. It is a case of the provinces seeing to-day what London saw yesterday—namely, a revival, or the copy of 'a West End success'. In the provinces, as in the heart of London, the commercial theatre is dying: it has been smothered by a tea-cosy of its own devising.

Yet not everywhere is the scene so black: in many cities, including

London, there is a movement towards the establishment of little theatres similar to the development of little reviews during the past three decades. This year, too, R. H. Ward sets off with a new venture —the Century Theatre. This is a portable theatre capable of holding two hundred, carrying a repertory of three plays. The theatre is quite self-contained and can be assembled within a few hours: it is built on the principle of drawing up a number of coaches alongside each other so that by letting down their sides they can be joined together to produce an auditorium and stage. On the road this travelling theatre will resemble a line of coaches, somewhat like the procession of caravans to the old fairs. The reminder is perhaps timely, because when the moralities left the portals of the church it was to take their stand in both the market-place and fair. It was only when the theatre in England became encircled within a wooden O that it became a place for meeting friends, for gallants to display their verbal witticisms, and for fops and orange girls to show off their latest finery. The transition, therefore, from the fairground to the confines of a wooden O represented something of a challenge. To the dramatist it meant if he was to be heard (literally) he must have something important to say and, to hold his audience's attention, say it supremely well: to the actor it meant if he was to succeed he must magnetize his public by his artistry, since failure to do so would mean his summary dismissal by catcall. Undoubtedly until the close of the nineteenth century there was a continual see-saw movement between great dramatists and actors, for the history of the English stage would suggest that a period of outstanding players is coincident with a time of poor plays and *vice-versa*. (In 1776 of the thirteen parts which Garrick chose to appear in during his farewell performance, ten were written before 1730.) Yet one makes a reservation for the twentieth century.

Little theatres—the other theatres as Norman Marshall has christened them—are essentially the theatres of experiment; and because they are largely experimental they are largely amateur. For instance during the 'forties there has been only one experimental play which has made its *début* in the West End: that play was produced in 1945: it was *The Banbury Nose* by Peter Ustinov.[1] Based on Kierkegaard's dictum, 'life can only be understood backward, it must be lived forwards', the action of the time sequence was reversed, the first act taking place in 1943, the three succeeding acts in 1920, 1900 and 1884. Against such a background, Lieutenant-General Hume-Banbury is presented as the dominating master of an ancient rambling Sussex mansion. Two generations are contrasted: the one subservient, whilst the other—epitomized by the grandson—revolts against the

[1]Ustinov was first spotted by James Agate. Agate's comments were sharply critical, but encouraging. Since then it seems to have been a critics' conspiracy, now that the master is dead, to knock down the idol of their own making: this is contemporary tragedy. But when Ivor Brown's name is a mere footnote in the history of the drama, Ustinov will be remembered for his *House of Regrets* and *The Banbury Nose*.

traditions which have bound his father. Here was a theme out of the general run, but if one looks elsewhere for similar theatrical initiative one is disappointed: all the other successful experiments have been imports from the periphery of London. In fact apart from the classics, the London managers cut something of a funereal picture: they are like undertakers walking before a hearse. As Tryeplyev cries out in *The Seagull*: '. . . to my mind the present-day theatre is nothing but routine, superstition'.

In avoiding this routine, this superstition, strolling and barnstorming players have contributed a vital chapter to the development of the English regional theatre. As Hazlitt so well understood, it is the provincial start of a player's career which is 'the poetical and truly enviable part of it'. The thunder of applause from a brilliant overflowing London audience, he once declared, 'can never equal the light-hearted intoxication of unlooked-for success in a barn'. Those who have appeared in amateur theatricals (and later joined the professional stage) have often borne testimony to this, since the role of the strolling player and the amateur are very similar. They bring a spontaneity to their acting which is essential if poetry is to be dramatic in the theatre. The actress who plays Viola nearly always finds the delivering of her disguised story of her love for Orsino an embarrassment: it is so well-known that she fears her telling of it may be hackneyed. But if she is playing the part for the first or second time, after she has declared her sister's history to be 'a blank'—'she never told her love'—there may be a pause, as if the story ended there; and then the image of the 'worm i' the bud' may come as a new suggestion out of which may grow the other image of 'patience sitting on a monument smiling at grief'. This was the memorable quality of Dora Jorfan's performance in the last century and it is true of Peggy Ashcroft's in this: it is a quality too which infuses all Gielgud's work to-day, but a quality which is singularly lacking from the contemporary stage.[2] That is why amateur acting is so important; it does not become a prey to the conventions of a past decade, but even in period pieces reflects its own conventions: it becomes a mirror to life and consequently a living and organic art.

The same problem faces the dramatist in his task—the problem of forging a language that is both contemporary and sufficiently charged as to be credible without being stilted. There is no paucity of material and themes abound; but the themes chosen must not be mere rehashes: by experiment, following the Shakespearian precept, future dramatists must develop what has gone before them. For the dramatist's perception should be a pre-occupation with life, his truths

[2]In detail this is what happens. An actor is accepted at a Dramatic Academy to-day: he is taught to act by somebody who was originally taught to act in the 'thirties. The result is that by the time he is fully-fledged in the 'sixties he has been trained in the conventions of a generation senior to his own. If he is inclined toward laziness, the fault will never be mended; if he is either hard-working, observant or a genius, there is a chance it may.

developing along with those of his audience: of course he may be a better seer than his hearers, but his work will be to a large extent a reflection of their faith. For this reason M. François Mauriac's journal in this number is especially pertinent: like so many of his countrymen —Rivière, Alain-Fournier, Julien Green—his love of the theatre is patent in many of its notes, notes which could lend themselves admirably to dramatic treatment. One has but another example of that difference between Paris and London which Henry James noted. For in the theatres in Paris the auditorium seems less divided: it is not a case of the literary and social lions frequenting the stalls (how wittily Firbank drew them in *Caprice*); the roughs and toughs, the 'gods' (how Bloy would have eulogised that term). Instead there is a unity, whereas far too often in London there is open conflict—though heaven knows that the hardness of a gallery seat quickly emphasizes a bad play and a bad actor! In fact without appearing a Gallomaniac perhaps one can state the case this way: that the French theatre in spirit is nearest to the English mediæval theatre in spirit. The audiences are similar. It is a theatre of tanners and plasterers, vintners and fitters, as well as of dukes and duchesses, ex-Queens and Eastern potentates: the audience has come to vault on language, to accept a challenge, to be intoxicated. Across the channel another audience assembles: it has come to be entertained, to be lulled into a coma, to sip tea. Unless the old managements collapse—they are not likely to go of their own free-will—the English theatre is doomed to becoming nothing other than a series of books of the month arrayed in evening dress.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Grateful acknowledgements are here made to M. François Mauriac for permission to include certain extracts from his journal and to the translator, Miss Elizabeth King; to M. Jacques Maritain for permission to include his article on 'Action', to the translator, Mr. Joseph Frank, and to Mr. J. E. Palmer, Editor of the *Sewanee Review* (U.S.A.), under whose ægis the article first appeared; to Miss Kay Cicellis for permission to include her story, 'Aegean Storm', and to the Harvill Press who are bringing out shortly a collection of her stories.

The Wind and the Rain series of lectures continues. On Tuesday, March 21st, at 8 o'clock, Mr. Francis Berry will speak on 'Beowulf and the Modern Poet' (Chairman: Mr. L. A. G. Strong). The last meeting in the present season will take place early in May, the exact date to be announced later. The subject will be 'The Work of Ezra Pound' and will include a number of different speakers speaking on different aspects of his work—Pound the Poet, Pound the Translator, Pound the Editor—as well as a selection of readings from his works. This particular meeting is being run in conjunction with the sponsors of *Nine*. All meetings are held at the Ethical Church Hall, 4a Inverness Place, London, W.2. Inverness Place is a turning off the Queen's Road, almost directly opposite Bayswater (Metropolitan) Station; Queensway (Central Line) Station is two minutes' walk from the Hall. After meetings, light refreshments are served.

FRAGMENTS FROM AN OCCUPATION JOURNAL

FRANÇOIS MAURIAC

September, 1943.

Little by little that delicate outer shell which encases us long after youth has fled falls away, and nothing remains save the hard substance of being, made up of dead cells.

The Christian life which yet is not sanctity: taste of spiritual comfort, of peace, respites which the imagination offers, prodigal returns. . . . Rhythm of a life that is perhaps the most worthless in the eyes of God.

So long as a man lives, there is always in him a poison which is never eliminated. Whatever the causes of their deaths, all men die poisoned.

The Christian, the religious man, in spite of appearances, is the person who is least capable of meditating on the physical fact of death. Too many conceptions come between his thought and the idea of 'not-being'. For the Christian, to meditate on death is to think of that which is not death.

October, 1943.

Golden day, bathed in that light which human genius has depicted (Vermeer, Claude Lorrain, Corot). How God seems separated from the world of events! I live at the heart of a threat, vague, stifling. This is a cloud from which at any moment lightning may strike. These are again epochs of history when one may not sleep in one's bed.

I shall recall with delight the days of anguish when I walked in the unknown quarters of Paris.

To be patient in awaiting the hour of our release. What is left to me of life is consecrated to the spiritual struggle. To live in the presence of death, not of Christian death, which, for me, goes without saying, but in the presence of that dissolution, that effacement, to which my thought turns with such difficulty. To look upon this time of hidden life as a retreat preparatory to an obscure and lonely death just as much as to an impassioned and illustrious old age.

I do not know that our anguish in 1943 differs much from that which cave-man experienced. At each turn the same danger lies in wait for us which threatened him. On the metaphysical plane, our life is no longer governed as was his by the phases of the moon; we no longer fasten our destiny on the stars. But for us, Christians, the problem of salvation has taken the place of these ancient and impon-

derable mysteries. Among all the promises of eternal life made to us by Christ, the one on which we most avoid putting emphasis is that which concerns our despair: Hell, that is eternal despair.

November, 1943.

Indifference to forebodings, vague but ever-present. Disregard of the Beast which perhaps lies in wait for me. No danger from without so long as it does not already possess me (as recently an illness) prevails against my sense of inward contemplation.

The density of fog over these plough-lands, as inaccessible as the sea, gives me the illusion of security. But each ring of the telephone bell makes me prick up my ears like a hare.

This vast, naked plain where I hide myself (but everyone sees me . . .): the theatre for the last act of the play, a stage set and ready for a Shakespearian climax.

December, 1943.

How easy it seems at certain times to do without God. It is like a part which one ceases to play, a game from which one withdraws—not so much for wrong-doing; that choice no longer rests with us—there is no more wrong for us to do, for ten leagues round. It is simply that the worn-out old nag breaks from the shafts, and, legs stiff, gallops ridiculously, tries to stampede, attempts a charge.

I often have the illusion, in this world of bloodshed, that the spiritual danger no longer exists and that, on this plane, there is no longer anything to fear from an individual lapse: one does not ask for an account from a crucified humanity. 'No, but from you who are not crucified, from you, who in spite of your despair, whatever happens to the rest of the world, are still monstrously happy. . . .'

A walk in the mist-laden forest of Montmélian. Intervention of God at the first signal of distress. Faithful little victim. The Lamb which licks the fingers of the butcher.

The end of a lonely year, at this solemn moment in the history of the world. When we return from our walks, in the shining winter, the windows rattle with the sound of explosions. Forebodings fill my thoughts. I have the feeling of an irresistible tide of water mounting towards my hiding-place.

January, 1944.

The burgeoning of Spring touches the muddy plain with greenness. The woods, beneath the leaden sky, are swollen with purple blood. The ravens' wings whistle. On this industrialized earth no trace remains of the primitive forest, save the brambles, the tatters of leaves on the embankments of the road. Everywhere telegraph-poles, everywhere pylons. Beside a team of six oxen, a clumsy ploughman comes, bespattered with mud; beneath the hood which conceals his face I suddenly see the cheeks whipped to that childlike pink which

Renoir used, the eyes the colour of forget-me-nots: the strain of Fleming or of Pole.

. . . The impossibility of not judging someone on a single word. X who asks me 'What beauty are you preparing for us now?'

February, 1944.

The death of Jean Giraudoux. Profound feeling. We were never intimate. But during the thirty-six years for which men of the same generation watch each other live, the map of each destiny is known to all the others. At what point his work (which I admire) touches me little, how shall I ever dare to confess?

Reply to a student: 'In the sheltered atmosphere of college, you play with passions born in the same hour as yourself, which are still of your stature. But these kittens will grow until they become fierce tigers. . . . Beware of keeping all your life a yearning for this disturbing fascination. You will advance backwards, your face turned towards that brief interval in the passage of your fate when you were a boy saved by the mechanism of college life from all that was not this torment. You were born at a time when it is possible for you to contemplate the true sorrow without the sweets of consolation, unmasked, stark, unbearable. When you rise in the cold dawn of the dormitory, think of the hostages, even your elders, falling at that very hour. Your loneliness, your anguish, your tears, understand that all this, in this world of bloodshed, has become a luxury. . . .

'Nothing separates us from Christ. It is an error of a certain type of Catholic education to persuade us that sin cuts off all communication with God. If that were so there would be nothing to do but to abandon oneself to one's heart's content. But it is not true. You can do nothing which could avert the gaze which never leaves us, which is only more or less sad according to what we accomplish. In this drama for two characters, it is not sufficient for you alone to break off the dialogue: you renounce him, but he does not renounce you. Look for me in those of my books which you admire, but there only. A writer of my age has nothing to offer save dross: that which the creative fire has rejected.'

In the past, as often as we were aware of the conformity of Christ's sufferings with our own particular grief, we were not cast down at the prospect of anything which came by way of him, even from a distance. To-day, many among us wipe the spit from our faces, where the hand of authority has left its blood-stained mark. And we should even be tempted to say: 'That, Lord, you have not suffered. To your manifest Passion, you should have added this to which we are to-day submitting. Because you were the Lamb of God, you should have encompassed in a single agony all the tears and all the blood which our brothers have shed in five years.

'That silence of the Father, which wrung from you the "Why hast thou forsaken me?" which this world, dedicated to bloodshed, still re-echoes, you knew beforehand that that silence would be submitted

to one day, no longer only in secrecy, in personal destinies, but that it would overcome the nations, whole races. It is the proof above all proofs, that this void hollowed out by your absence, should be evident in this criminal world.'

Le Soulier de Satin, by Paul Claudel, is the drama of a type of Christianity which no longer exists. His work was able only to grow and to blossom in the desert. Some eccentricities, a disconcerting æsthetic, were not sufficient to keep away the crowd: on the contrary, the far-fetched contrivances of *Le Soulier de Satin,* in so far as they contribute to the staging of the play, have attracted and held to the Comédie Française a public otherwise incapable of entering into this sublime game of nature and of Grace. And certainly, if Christianity no longer exists, there still exist Christians who are not baffled by the story of Rodrigue and Prouhèze. But they are not sufficiently numerous to constitute a homogeneous audience: there no longer exists a people of faith.

By a curious reversal, in the seventeenth century, when such a people existed, its poets amused it with Fables and Greek mythology. In place of a Polyeucte, a Theodore, what pagan heroes were offered for the admiration of a society that was highly devout but to which love was the main business of life and which was never mean with its passions!

A boy and a girl of 1944 cannot have even an inkling of the barrier which stood between Prouhèze and Rodrigue. The flaming sword between them is perceptible only to the eyes of Faith. On the other hand, what Christian, even the most indifferent, does not reach the end of his life with this sword broken in his heart? How familiar to the man of faith is the story of Prouhèze, pronounced ridiculous by the man who is without God! To the man of faith, not to the saint. Neither Rodrigue nor Prouhèze are saints. The drama of sanctity understands only two characters: the creature and the Creator, that which is not and That Which Is. The drama of simple faith, which is that of *Le Soulier de Satin,* presents three characters in conflict: the infinite Being and two mortals who love each other, who cannot help loving each other, but who cannot come together without offending the Love which has created them for Himself alone.

The wonderful thing about *Le Soulier de Satin* and *Partage de Midi* is that Claudel does not judge human love from the point of view of sanctity. For Polyeucte, intoxicated with God, the creature no longer has the slightest value. Here drama no longer exists: the Creator reigns supreme over the divinized soul, the conflict is resolved in the absorption of the creature by Uncreated Being. The Claudelian hero, caught between two loves, lacerated, divided to the point of torment, recognizes the grandeur of a passion from which it is ordained that he should tear himself. He does not believe that this link which binds him to the creature has been forged outside the sphere of the divine will. Grace, if it forbids two lovers to be joined together, creates between them a mysterious relationship: it binds

them at the same time as it divides them, in such a way that henceforth they will not be lost by themselves, they will not be saved by themselves. Rodrigue and Prouhèze, despite the seas which stretch between them, cannot either of them breathe a sigh which has not its echo in the heart of the beloved: from one shore of the Atlantic to the other, listen to these two who converse together in a whisper.

Translated by ELIZABETH KING

THE CROWN AND THE FABLE

Shall I gather the music of spirit and stars
Or white speech of fire and sing of a grief
Before the world's dark brain truly trembles and fails
Or talons of ruin tear my heart's home down?
The grief that lingers is the climacteric we have chosen
And the shrieking jewels of our torment's crown.

The cold crisis of meaning like a poisoned knife
Moves in my worktime of love and horror
And the shadow of song cries in my burning hand.
Word-wings wheel at my summer's window
Like birds of loneliness, guilt and Golgotha
And waters of death wash my lifetime's land.

Shall I gather the music of sound and seasons
Or word-haunted wonder and sing of a loss
Before the violins of blood truly stutter and break
Or bread of air fades from my life-stained table?
The loss that lingers is what we are not yet
And what we are only in a childhood's fable.

And the cold crisis of faith like a wounded angel
Moves in my worktime of desire and error
While the shadow of blood falls on my burning floor.
But what kiss of dreams smooths my summer's brow
Like lips of prayer and hands of light
Or like a shining wind shakes my lifetime's door?

HUGO MANNING

ACTION

JACQUES MARITAIN

I. The Perfection of Human Life

So far as metaphysics and theoretical philosophy are concerned, one may say that Thomism is an existentialist intellectualism. And this very fact, plus the primacy of the speculative in this philosophy, illustrates the essential difference which separates it from contemporary existentialism, as well as from all philosophy which renounces its own name in renouncing speculation for action and in confusing knowledge with power.

Whether it be a question of practical philosophy or of ethics, the existentialism of St. Thomas keeps the same intellectualist character in this sense: practical philosophy remains speculative in its mode (it is a philosophy), although its object, moral conduct may be practical. Even in practical philosophy there are natures to be known,—which serve, this time, to establish norms of conduct, since here one knows in order to guide action. But in another sense, it must be pointed out that, in passing into the domain of ethics, this existentialism becomes voluntarist if one considers the essential role it grants to the will (by which alone a man is constituted as purely or simply good or bad) and the dependence in which practical judgement is placed with regard to the actual movement of desires towards the aims of the subject.

And it is precisely because, in ethics or practical philosophy, Thomist existentialism devotes itself not so much to the existence exercised by things as to the act that the liberty of the subject brings into existence, that the differences in the metaphysical point of view, however deep-rooted, do not prevent certain contacts between this existentialism and the contemporary brand. To tell the truth, it is in the domain of moral philosophy that this latter seems to contribute views most worthy of interest. However mistaken its conception of liberty, it has an authentic feeling for it, and for its essential transcendence with regard to the specifications and attributes of the essence, even those of the 'profound ego'[1]; it has a sense of the importance (in a way creative) of the moral act, of the degrees of profundity it admits, and of the absolute uniqueness, irreducible to any chain of anterior events and determinations, of the instant when, by the exercise of his liberty, the subject reveals himself to himself and takes a stand. If all this were not spoiled by the acceptance of the absurd and the elimination of nature and the *forme rationis,* as well as of any object, any causality and any finality, we would have here the premises of a moral philosophy and of a philosophy of liberty.

So far as the thoroughly existentialist character of Thomist ethics

[1]Cf. J. P. Sartre: *L'Etre et le Néant,* pp. 78-81.

is concerned,[2] I will content myself with recalling two points of doctrine that are well known and quite significant.

The first relates to the perfection of human life. St. Thomas teaches that perfection consists in love of charity, and that each of us must strive toward the perfection of love according to his condition and capabilities. All morality, then, depends upon what is the most existential thing in the world. For love—this is another Thomist theme—is not directed at possibilities or pure essences; it is directed at what exists: one does not love possibilities, one loves that which exists or is destined to exist. And it is, finally, because God is the Existent by Himself in His ocean of all perfections that the love of what is better than all goodness is that in which man attains the perfection of his being. This perfection does not consist in rejoining an essence by virtue of a supreme exactitude at copying the ideal; it consists in loving by going through all that is unexpected, dangerous, obscure, demanding and extravagant in love; it consists in the fullness and delicacy of the dialogue and union of person to person, until the transfiguration which, as St. John of the Cross would say, makes of man a god by participation: 'two natures in one spirit and love', in a single spiritual super-existence of love.

II. The Moral Judgement

The second point of doctrine, which particularly controls the whole theory of the virtue of prudence, concerns the judgement of the moral conscience and the manner by which, at the centre of concrete existence, desires intervene in the regulation of the moral act by reason. Here St. Thomas makes the rectitude of the intellect depend on that of the will, and this by virtue of the existentiality—no longer speculative but practical—of moral judgement. The truth of practical intellect is understood not as conformity to an extramental being but as conformity to a right desire; the end is no longer to know what is, but to bring into existence that which is not yet; further, the act of moral choice is so individualized, both by the singularity of the person from which it proceeds and the context of the contingent circumstances in which it takes place, that the practical judgement in which it is expressed and by which I declare to myself: this is what I must do, can be right only if, *hic et nunc,* the dynamism of my will is right, and tends toward the true goods of human life.

This is why practical wisdom, *prudentia,* is a virtue indivisibly moral and intellectual at the same time, and why, like the judgement

[2]It is by reason of this thoroughly existential character of Thomist ethics that, however extensive, necessary and fundamental the element of natural morality may be in it, a moral philosophy adequately taken, that is, truly suited to guide action, is conceivable in Thomist terms only if it takes into account the existential state of humanity, with all its wounds and all its resources—and then if it takes account of the superior data of theology (as well as the data of ethnology and sociology). Cf. *Science et Sagesse,* pp. 228-362.

of conscience itself, it cannot be replaced by any sort of theoretical knowledge or science.

The same moral incident never occurs twice in the world; strictly speaking, there is never a precedent each time that I find myself in position to do a new thing and have to introduce into existence an act unique to the world—an act obliged to conform to moral law in a manner and in conditions that are strictly mine, and have not been seen before. Useless to thumb through a dictionary of cases of conscience! Moral treatises will, of course, tell me the universal rule or the universal rules that I must apply; they will not tell me how *I* must—I, my unique self—apply them in the unique context in which I am involved. No knowledge, however perfect, minute and detailed, of moral essences, however particularized the essences may be (but they always remain general); no casuistry, no string of pure deductions, no science can relieve me of the judgement of conscience, and, if I have any virtue, of the exercise of the virtue of prudence, where the rectitude of my will must mould the accuracy of my vision. In the practical syllogism, the major premise, which enunciates the universal rule, speaks to the intellect alone; but the minor and the conclusion are on a different plane, and are uttered by the entire subject, whose intellect is carried toward those existential ends to which, by virtue of his very liberty, his powers of craving are actually subjugated.[3]

There are objective norms of morality, there are duties and rules, because the gauge of reason is the formal constitutive of human morality. But I apply them, and I apply them well, only if they are embodied in the ends which actually attract my desire and in the actual movement of my will. In many cases, man finds himself faced with simple rules like those forbidding homicide or adultery, which pose no moral problem except that of being effectively followed. But it is necessary, if man is to follow them, that at the moment of temptation his inner voice does not utter them like simple universal rules which, while sufficient to condemn, do not stir to action; he must recognize in them, by a sort of painful travail of inner assimilation

[3]There are, in truth, two practical syllogisms, one flowing into the speculativo-practical, the other into the practico-practical.

The first would be, for example: 'Murder is forbidden by the law. This act which attracts me is a murder. Then this act is forbidden by the Law'. The conclusion expresses the rule of reason of which I am aware, and from which I turn my eyes away when I sin. This syllogism considers the act and its law; the subject does not intervene except to submit to the universal like an X without any individuality who is merely part of the species.

The second syllogism would be, for example: 'Murder is forbidden by the Law. This act which attracts me is a murder and would make me deviate from the path of my supreme love. Therefore, I will not do it (and blessed be the Law!).' Or, on the contrary: 'Murder is forbidden by the Law. This act which attracts me is a murder *and in it I place my supreme love. Therefore, I will do it (and so much the worse for the Universal Law!)*'.

In this second syllogism it is the existential disposition of the subject in the free affirmation of his unique ego which determines the conclusion.

and reflection, the most individual and personal demand of his desire for the ends to which he has related his life. Without this, he 'will not accomplish the good that he loves' (that he loves ineffectually, only according as he sees it clearly in itself) and he 'will accomplish the evil that he does not wish' (that he does not wish insofar as it is evil, but which, nevertheless, he makes his present good). But in many other cases, which in truth make up the tissue of our moral existence, man finds himself confronted with a diversity of duties in conflict and with multiple rules that clash in a context of circumstances where the problem: What ought I truly to do? is posed. It is then that he must have recourse to the *regulae arbitrariae* of prudence, to those rules that not only take account of the objective particulars of given conditions but become decisive solely by reason of the basic urges of the subject (supposedly proper) and the inclinations of his virtues.

III

We are told, as if it were a discovery, that in our most fundamental, freest—and our wisest—moral choices, it is not the motives on which reason deliberates that play the essential role but the unpredictable *élan* of inscrutable subjectivity, often disconcerting for the intellect of the subject himself. But how could it be otherwise, if it be true that all the unknown reality that the subject carries in himself, all his secret capacities, his radical aspirations, the strength or fragility of his moral substance, his virtues (if he have any), and the obscure call of his destiny must all be taken into account by the judgement of his conscience in the instant that this judgement is freely given? All these things are unformulated for him, unknown to him in terms of reason; but the obscure instinct that he has of himself, and, if he have virtues, his virtue of prudence, apprehend them without knowing it, according to the indescribable mode of knowledge by connaturality; and these are the elements of moral estimation—inexpressible conceptually—that are most important for the practical accuracy of the decision that he will take when his will makes decisively effective this or that objective motive vitally related to this whole interior world. So that the freest decision will sometimes reveal itself with all the appearances of an inevitable event—but made such by the actual exercise of free will;—the most prudent decision will sometimes appear irrational and inexplicable—the reasons for it are hidden in the substance of the subject. And when we recollect it later, once separated from the actual clarity in which it was bathed—although this clarity could not be grasped conceptually—we may retrospectively doubt its prudence and even its liberty.

In the moral problems of which we speak, where it is necessary to conciliate conflicting duties and virtues, our choice has not only to be exercised between the good and the bad, but also and most often between the good and the better. And it is at this point that we enter into the most profound mysteries of moral life, and, at the same

time, the individuality of the moral act assumes its supreme dimensions. St. Thomas teaches that the measure of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is on a higher plane than that of the moral virtues, and the gift of counsel is on a higher plane than that of prudence. The saints always surprise us. Their virtues are freer than those of a man merely virtuous. Sometimes, in similar exterior circumstances, they act quite differently from the normally virtuous person. They are indulgent where he would be severe, severe where he would be indulgent. When a saint abandons her children or exposes them to the temptation of revolting by taking the veil; when another saint allows her brother to be murdered at the door of her convent so as not to violate the cloister; when a saint presents himself stark naked before his bishop through love of poverty; when another chooses to be a beggar and scandalizes people by his vermin; when another abandons the duties of his office and becomes a galley slave through love for the prisoners; when still another allows himself to be unjustly condemned rather than defend himself against a dishonourable accusation—they transgress the measure. If this measure is higher than that of reason, it is not because of the object taken by itself that the act measured by the saint's standard is better than an act measured by the simple moral virtues; it is better because of an interior impulsion they receive from the Spirit of God in the depths of their incommunicable subjectivity, and which aspires, beyond the measure of reason, to a superior good seen by them alone, and to which existence they are called on to bear witness. For this reason, there would be no sainthood if all excess—all that reason judges to be extravagant—were removed from the world. And it is for this reason that one speaks more profoundly than one knows by saying of such acts that they are admirable, not imitable; they cannot be generalized or universalized; they are good, they are the best of all moral acts, and they are good only for those who perform them. At this point we are far from the Kantian universal, and from morality defined by the possibility of erecting the maxim of an act into a universal law.

IV

The great error of Kierkegaard, in the midst of his great intuitions, was to separate and oppose as two heterogeneous worlds the world of generality, or of universal law, and that of the unique testimony, impossible to justify by reason, rendered by the 'knight of faith'. This distinction made it necessary to sacrifice ethics, or at least, to 'suspend' it. In reality, these two worlds have a continuity; they are both part of the ethical universe, which is itself differentiated into typically diverse zones according to the degree of profundity in moral life—from the ethical zone of the man-animal to the ethic of the spiritual man and of the *pneuma*; from the completely superficial zone where the moral life is scarcely moral, scarcely integrated by conscience, composed of external conformity to common opinion and the rules and taboos of the social group, to the extreme profundities

hidden in the divine life, where moral existence is fully moral and fully integrated by conscience, the conscience of this *spiritualis homo* who judges all things and is judged by no one.[4]

Not only the tragic hero like Agamemnon, but Abraham himself sacrificing Isaac continues to belong to the universe of ethics—Abraham, whose heart is pierced by the personal order of God and the contradiction tearing him apart, still had a law, the first law of all: Thou shalt adore the incomprehensible God and thou shalt obey Him. And Abraham knew obscurely, not by means of treatises on moral theology, but by the instinct of the Holy Spirit, that the murder of his son was not proscribed by the law prohibiting murder, because it was ordered by the Master of Life.[5]

On the other hand, as soon as ethical conduct is not merely a waking dream guided by the fear of social sanctions or the concern for justifying oneself before others; as soon as man has really gone beyond the threshold of moral life, the universal law, as we indicated a little while ago, is vitally internalized, made part of our flesh and blood, existentialized in the dynamism of the individual tending toward those goals that are for him most important. Even when a man obeys the law as its slave, because he wants to perform an evil act but has more fear of Hell and the anger of God;—this is not the mere logical subsumption of a particular case under a general law, of an anonymous act, performed by anyone whatsoever, under a rule which states what all men must obey; it is his own particular fear, the fear ravaging his conscience and making him tremble at the thought of losing his soul, that crushes under the law the will to do evil, and makes him identify his self—unique and precious among all others—the troubled and rebellious self of this man that he is, with *all men* subjugated to the universal precept.

And when a man obeys the law as its follower, because, desiring justice before all, he does not desire this evil act which to-day tempts him and which the law forbids;—it is his own particular desire, stronger and deeper than the seductive attractions, it is his own hunger for the ends that he primarily desires for himself that harmonizes his will (which remains a will for the good) with the law, and which makes him identify his *self* with *all men* submissive to the universal precept.

And when he obeys the law as its friend, because the Spirit of God transforms him into one spirit and one heart with the Principle of the law, and, making of himself what the law commands, he is no longer under it;—it is his own particular love for his God and his All, a love sovereign and sovereignly free now, which makes him follow the law become his law, become the personal call by which the word of the One that he loves touches him—a law in relation to which

[4] *Spiritualis autem judicat omnia: et ipse a nemine judicatur.* St. Paul, I Cor. ii, 15.

[5] Cf. *Sum. theol.*, II-II, 54, 6, ad I.

he is henceforth no longer a *self* to be identified with *all men,* but *this man* himself, this man called by his name, to whom the law speaks in his pure solitude with God.

When St. Thomas teaches us that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are given to all because they are necessary to salvation, he informs us by this that at certain moments, at certain depths of the ethical universe, each of us may have to make Abraham's sacrifice and exceed the measure of reason, without being placed, for all that, in the exceptional situation and the exceptional grandeur of Abraham. When, with regard to the universe of ethics as a whole, with reference to the life of practical reason and the mere moral virtues, he teaches us that there is no exercise of virtue without the personal judgement of prudence, and more generally that there is no moral life without the personal judgement of conscience, he informs us by this that in all authentically moral acts, man, in order to apply and in applying the law, must incarnate the universal in his own individual existence where he is alone facing God.

With regard to our contemporary atheistic existentialists, it is not with anguish and sorrow, and with knowledge of its value (like Kierkegaard), but with the pleasure of barbarians and without knowing what they do, that, along with essence, they sacrifice the ethical universal. In truth, they seem to think that if there were a system of moral rules, these would automatically apply to particular cases, from which it would follow that all morality is defective because it should suffice—but does not—for a young man hesitating between breaking his mother's heart and joining the Forces of Fighting France to consult a dictionary of precepts to know what to do. In short, they imagine that morality dispenses with conscience, and substitutes its rules both for the invincibly personal judgement of that flexible and subtle faculty purchased at so high a price, as well as for the judgement (also invincibly personal and irreducible to any sort of science) of the virtue of prudence, which is purchased at an even more disturbing price. They replace all that by the chasm of the Pythian oracle because they have eliminated reason and hold the form of morality to consist in pure liberty alone. Let the perplexed young man listen at the cave of this oracle; his liberty itself will tell him how to make use of it.

And let him not be given advice! The least advice would risk blighting his liberty, preventing the beautiful serpent from issuing from the cave. The liberty of these philosophers of liberty is indeed singularly fragile. In uprooting it from reason, they have themselves made it weaker. As for us, we do not fear advice for human liberty. Fill it with as much advice as you like—we know that it is strong enough to digest them all, and that it lives on rational motivations which it manipulates for its purposes and of which it alone knows the efficacy. In sum, by suppressing generality and universal law one suppresses liberty, leaving only chaos thrusting out of the night it resembles. Because in suppressing generality and universal law one

suppresses reason, in which liberty has its root,[6] and from which so vast a desire flows into man that no explanation on earth and no objective solicitation, except Beatitude seen face to face, suffices to determine it.[7]

Translated by JOSEPH FRANK

[6] *Totius libertatis radix est in ratione constitua*: St. Thomas, *De Verit.*, 24, 2.
[7] Cf. *De Bergson á Thomas d'Aquin*, chap. V ('L'idée thomiste de la liberté').

DEEP SNOW

Now the birds have left me at last
Another snowfall has smoothed away
Every least
Trace of our desperate day.

Neither to nor from my door
Do footprints go now. And I
Who am so poor
Bless this utmost poverty.

Under my compassionate wall
To-day I watched One die.—
But this snowfall
Smoothed our ragged agony,

And we have left no scar on life,
That fluttering Outcast and I:
Rough sacrifice,
Sinned so reluctantly,

At the touch of the blameless snow
Has vanished.—How smooth this Death;
Without shadow;
Its own light; and perfect.

FRANCES BELLERBY

THE SUBLIME BALLET

An Essay on Sir Gawain and the Green Knight

FRANCIS BERRY

I

THIS poem, given passing praise by commentators and historians of literature, still awaits its due of exploration and appreciation. This is partly because of the difficulty of its language, which successive editions have done nothing to ease. Professors J. R. R. Tolkien and R. K. Gordon for instance, in their anxiety to preserve the appearance of the solitary MS., unnecessarily retain a symbol which stands for five distinct sounds. Neither do they mark the cæsura in the lines, although some typographical device is needed to aid the reader to readily perceive the rhythm or the rhythms since often the cæsura divides two units of diverse rhythmic schemes, and the pause is necessary to avoid confusion between the two. These, exacerbating unavoidable linguistic difficulties of the work, close the poem to the general reader, and slow down and interrupt the response of the student.[1]

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight is an unusually complete work of art, and its elaborate finish and this inclusiveness distinguishes it from other English mediæval romances. It is complete, in the first place, in that the three main artistic traditions, and patterns of civilization, which have exerted themselves in these Islands, converge—and are absorbed—within the poem.

The first, the native English tradition, is manifest both in form and in substance. The unknown poet employs the Anglo-Saxon alliterative metre for the 'block' of each stanza. This native rhythm, though suffering abrogation in the monasteries from the time of the Norman Conquest, had gone 'underground'. Superseded at court, neglected by polite and lettered circles, it continued in a rather altered form—in that the line lengthened and there was a relaxation of rules with respect to detail inside its expanded bulk—continued its vigour and sway among the lower classes which—when agricultural—are the exact, though unthinking, judges of the authentic (because most rudimentary) rhythms of their race. This popular English metre, in spite of being despised by the polite and lettered, sturdily rose to the surface, returned to the open, with accumulated force in the fourteenth century in north-west England and in the west Midlands.

Apart from the rhythm, the English contribution to the poem is also

[1]Nevertheless I quote from their edition (O.U.P.) because it is obviously the best there is. But I have indicated the pause in each line and converted the extinct symbol to the appropriate modern character, except that 'h' has to serve also for the lost back 'h', which had the sound of -ch in German *hoch*. I have used 'th' for the 'thorn', and interchanged 'u' and 'v'.

felt in the description of mountainous landscape in winter, in the second and fourth Fitts, and—in fact—in all the out-of-door parts. Such a passage as this, describing Gawain's journeying to keep his tryst:

> Sumwhyle wyth wormes he werres—and with wolves als,
> Sumwhyle wyth wodwos,—that woned in the knarres,
> Both with bulles and beres,—and bores otherquyle,
> And etaynes, that hym anelede—of the hehe felle;
> Nade he ben duhly and dryhe—and dryhtyn had served,
> Doutles he hade ben ded—and dreped ful ofte.
> For warre wrathed hym not so much,—that wynter was wors,
> When the colde cler water—fro the cloudes schadde,
> And fres er hit falle—myht to the fale erthe;
> Ner slayn wyth the slete—he sleped in his yrnes
> Mo nyhtes then innoghe—in naked rokkes,
> There as claterande fro the crest—the colde borne rennes,
> And henged hehe over his hede—in hard iisse-ikkles.[2]
>
> [ll. 720-733]

—such a passage does not merely equal anything in *Beowulf* or the *Wanderer* evoking Nature in its appalling and wintry aspects, it surpasses them. It also surpasses passages in Wordsworth, which are yet the nearest to it in modern English poetry, in imaginative kind. It is more effective than the Old English pieces because, where they generalize on the grimness of Winter, this crystallizes the pervasive grimness of Winters as well as of *a winter,* for, after a series of illustrations of a man battling against wild beasts and weather, and after a gnomic

> When the colde cler water—fro the cloudes schadde,
> And fres er hit falle—myht to the fale erthe;

(which certainly recalls the axioms of the *Wanderer* or *Seafarer* vein) the movement is clenched by a vivid particularization—the image of the frozen torrent, which

> henged hehe over his hede—in hard iisse-ikkles.

It is in this tendency to ram home a built-up atmosphere with a closely observed image that *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* has an advantage over Old English poems where the effect is that of accumulation rather than a gauged approach to a terminal 'capping'.

On the other hand, the comparatively rare passages in the *Prelude,* such as the skating episode, where the ice 'tinkled like iron', which deal with physical action, miss the fourteenth century poem's ability to render exertion and strain with a rhythmic immediacy and exactitude as well as a verbal immediacy and exactitude. Superb as the Wordsworth passage is, the vividness of the scene described is filmed over by the poet's meditations, by his assembling the parts of a memory, not—as with the presentation of those of Gawain's travel—for their own sake, but because they are significant in relation to the

[2]Wodwos—satyrs; knarres—crags; anelede—pursued; wrathed—bothered; fale—pale; yrnes—armour (irons); borne—stream.

psychological principles deduced from them. Beside it, the action in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is given naked.

Here is another passage from the poem:

> Thay bogen bi bonkkes—ther boyes ar bare,
> Thay clomben bi clyffes—ther clenges the colde,
> The heven wats up halt,—bot ugly there-under;
> Mist muged on the mor—malt on the mountes,
> Ech hille hede a hatte—a myst-hakel huge.
> Brokes byled and breke—bi bonkkes aboute,
> Schyre schaterande on schores—ther thay doun schowued.[3]
>
> [ll. 2077-2083]

This piece is representative of the vigour of the whole. The vigour is both rhythmic and verbal in so far as the two are separately analysable. The so-called relaxation of the rules of Anglo-Saxon prosody of the classical period was in fact not symptomatic of degeneration but were liberties taken 'for the sake of order',[4] for the sake of greater rhythmic fidelity to the subject matter than the earlier rules allowed. Here, for example, the latter—or 'b' half—of the opening lines of the extract rhythmically convey a qualification, a menacing after-thought to the statement in the first—the 'a' half of the line, a progressive intensification culminating in the third half-line introduced by 'bot'. These afterthoughts whereby a 'hitch' is reserved until hopes or confidence are reached and then released is a key device of English popular humour and, in speech, is conveyed by an intonation which is here rhythmically ushered—the 'a' half-lines rising to their end, followed by a drop after the pause, which hence becomes more than just metrically important. It divides two different rhythms. The grim atmosphere built up—though relieved by a glancing humour—is then rammed home by a series of particular images.

The second tradition present, though interflocked inextricably, is the French courtly tradition, which gives the whole a superb bracing, correcting the poem's (English) disposition to lounge into oafish overamplitude, instilling a surgent spirit, and zealously governing it to balance, guiding it to a perfection of Form. It is behind the controlled elation of the banquet at Camelot:

> Then the first cors come—with crakkyng of trumpes,
> With meny baner ful briht—that therbi henged;
> Nwe nakryn noyse—with the noble pipes,
> Wylde werbles and wyht—wakned lote,
> That meny hert ful hihe—hef at her towches.[5]
>
> [ll. 116-120]

The brilliance of imagery, rhythmically buoyed-up, the fine fettle of this can be contrasted with the feasting in the *Eve of St. Agnes*. (Keats, not describing a contemporary life, drowsily prolongs a dense romantic dream, enumerates its hazy accoutrements). French civilization is

[3]Bogen—turned; halt—high; muged—drizzled; malt—melted; myst-hakel—mist cloak.

[4]T. S. Eliot: *The Music of Poetry.*

[5]Cors—course (of meal); nakryn—kettledrum; lote—lute.

behind the description of the New Year game, with kisses and forfeits, before the banquet:

> Sythen riche forth runnen—to reche hondeselle,
> Yeyed yeres-giftes on hih—yelde hem bi hond,
> Debated busyly—aboute the giftes;
> Ladies lahed ful loude—thoh thay lost haden,
> And he that wan wats not wrothe,—that may ye wel trawe,[6]
>
> [ll. 66-70]

where the sly humour is not verbal, not a built-in subtlety of any kind, but is a precipitate administered from the interior, from a clearly visualized scene, the 'thoh thay lost haden' is a statement and not a Chaucer-like comment.

The French tradition likewise is behind the delighted visual realization of the dances, armour, the castellated buildings, the hunting passages with all its rites in the third Fitt. It is eloquent, also, in the third Fitt, where the Lady of the Castle, in the absence of her husband, sues Gawain for his love. It is a development, because an inversion, of that convention of adulterous homage, that *amour courtoise,* initiated by the Troubadours and continued by the Northern French poets.

The gallantry, mirth, colour, grace and the code of flirtation, the civilized wealth of the Court are yielded full tribute in this poem which balances the 'fine flower of human life' against the ungracious and beating violence of Nature as realized in the descriptions of wintry landscapes. The dualism of Court and Nature as, however, resolved by the poem in that noble society, is itself revealed as a part of Nature disciplined by codes of taste and honour. All life is shown as a kind of exquisite ballet subject to rhythmic laws of a seasonal decay and renewal, but court society is subject to a stricter application of these laws for its own rare enjoyment. This stricter application partakes of Art in its sense of balance between consciousness and unconsciousness, but—as Polixenes says—the 'Art itself is Nature'.

Of the three great traditions operating within *Sir Gawain* the third is the first in time to have exerted itself in Britain: the Celtic, here more particularly, the Welsh. It is the pure factitiousness of scholars to impute the immediate sources of the work to supposed non-surviving French intermediaries while there is nothing to prove that the author of *Sir Gawain,* who lived in Cheshire or South Lancashire, was ignorant of the stories in the original. At any rate in *Sir Gawain* he combined together two Celtic stories (or English versions of them that might have been current in the marches) which are singly extant in old Irish texts.

The Celtic contribution is at the heart of the poem: the story of the Green Man's challenge leading to the sequent Beheading Match, and also the story of Morgan the Fay's conjuring up by magic the Castle of Bercilak and its temptress and the Quest for the Green Chapel. Moreover, the whole panoply of Arthurian figures are as likely to come direct from Wales as through a French filtration. Besides, anyone

[6]Hondeselle—New Year's gifts; yeyed—lifted on high.

who has read the *Mabinogion* will recognize in *Sir Gawain* the Welsh technique of magic; the effects obtained through an artificially heightened luminousness of atmosphere; unexpected transposition of emphasis from the usually considered important aspects to the unimportant—such as the rendering of a detail fascinating and significant; sudden modulations of perspective; space and movement endowed with the quality they have in dreams; and peculiar emphasis on isolated colours (e.g., emblems, and sigla—such as the Pentagon in our poem) and on certain numbers, usually, as here, on three. In our poem it is the colour green and the number three that have a formal significance. Not only the two connected plots of *Sir Gawain,* but the intense magic envelope cast about the strangest episodes, are Celtic.

In the way *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* holds three cultures fused within it the poem is more inclusive than the work of the three other major fourteenth century poets: Chaucer, Gower or Langland. While the three great descriptions of hunting in the third Fitt betray a huge total joy in physical action that is more renaissance than mediæval, and the feasts and entertainments, while they have the tapestry grace of French romance, have also a charged zest and a relish that is nigh Shakespearean.

II

We customarily regard mediæval romance as something less darkly aboriginal, more sophisticated than Old English epic. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is splendidly furbished and highly civilized, but it is nourished by pagan seasonal myths at the roots. The Christian blazon is laid gleaming and exquisite on ancient and savage ritual. Since the poem is *about* the rhythmic laws of seasons, of decay and renewal; since the story incorporates myths embodying these rhythms and since the Form of the poem represents the same rhythms, it is proper that the second fitt opens with a recital of the cycle of the seasons:

> And eche sesoun serlepes—sued after other:
> After Crystenmasse com—the crabbed lentoun,
> That frayste flesch wyth fysche—and fode more symple;
> Bot thenne the weder of the worlde—with wynter hit thretes
> Cold clenges adown—cloudes uplyften,
> Schyre schedes the rayn—in schowres ful warme,
> Falles upon fayre flat—flowres there schewen,
> Bothe groundes and the greves—grene as her wedes,
> Bryddes busken to bylde—and bremlych syngen
> For solace of the softe somer—that sues therafter bi bonk;
> And blossumes bolne to blowe
> Bi rawes rych and rank,
> Then notes noble innoghe
> Ar herde in wod so wlonk.
> After, the sesoun of somer—wyth the soft wyndes,
> Quen Zeferus syfles hymself—on sedes and erbes;
> Wela wynne is the wort—that waxes thereoute,
> When the donkande dewe—dropes of the leves,
> To hide a blysful blusch—of the bryght sunne,
> Bot then hihes hervest—and hardenes hym sone,
> Warnes hym for the winter—to wax ful rype;

He dryves wyth droght—the dust for to ryse,
Fro the face of the folde—to flye ful highe;
Wrothe wynde of the welkyn—wrasteles with the sunne,
The leves lancen fro the lynde—and lyghten on the grounde,
And al grayes the gres—that grene wats ere:
Thenne al rypes and rotes—that ros upon fyrst,
And thus yirnes the yere—in yisterdayes mony,
And wynter wyndes agayn,—as the worlde askes.[1]

[ll. 516-530]

Whether the earth is desolate or burgeoning, the Life Force is operant, generously or subdued. Its generous dilation dependent on a hoarding contraction, when the pulse, at half-pressure, still beats, never idle though less perceptible. And as summer and winter alternate, with spring and autumn as intermediaries, so Church and Society observe the concordat with Nature: the discipline of the 'crabbed lentoun' is undergone while 'wynter hit thretes' and 'cold clenges down'. The social expansion at feasts is dependent on the contractive fasts. The rhythmical alternate conservation and prodigal expenditure is exemplified by the shape of the verse: the swelling bounty of the long lines contracts in the 'wheel' before resurgence into amplitude in the following stanza. In this passage is organized and finely-apparelled all the duress and joy dependent on the seasons,—the theme also of many mediæval folk-songs where it is treated with more edge. Related to this rhythm, continuing abated during winter, is the garb of the Green Knight, his life-colour, his branch of holly. Beheading does not kill him but sustains him, just as a tree is pollarded to aid its next year's growth. While to find the Green Knight's hidden chapel is to asserverate the truth that life is still active under the draping of winter desolation.

Perception of the relation of the poem to vegetation myths has led some to assert that Gawain was a Sun god. It is likely that some statement on the rapport between Earth and Sun emerges from the transactions between the Green Knight and Sir Gawain but the identity need not, and should not, be pressed to the exclusion of other meanings. Gawain and the Green Man are persons—in the poem—in their own right, and are as convincing—as such—as Shakespeare's characters. But as poetic products they are complex, and though analysis can attempt to discriminate their allegorical aspects, see them as representatives of primal deities, or as symbols of natural forces,—which they are, they are also more than that. Their various significances at different levels are resolved into unity in a poem in which they are major parts.

But, as opposed to this extraction of one aspect or another of the characters and giving them equivalences, it can be validly urged that the unknown poet was more conscious of the general import of his

[1]Serlepy—separately; schyre—bright; bremlych—glorious(ly); bolne—swollen; rawes—hedgerows; wlonk—proud; syfles—whistles; wynne—delightful; wort—plant; donkande—moistening; lynd—tree; gres—grass; yirnes—passes.

poem as a whole, of its celebration of the revolution of the year, and that this is contained in the poem's form, which neatly concludes where it began. The last long line of the poem, 'Sithen the sege and the assaut—wats sesed at Troye', preceding the quasi refrain, is a repetition of the opening one. The wheel has come full circle: or rather, events have revolved to a correspondent position on an ascending spiral, a stage nearer—as the final 'refrain' suggests—to that eternal and celestial ballet to which the earthly and temporal one just celebrated is a shadowy reflection.

III

The persons of the poem, then, like the persons of Chaucer's human comedy, are very real persons—but are transmogrified through the gauze of Celtic magic. But, in addition to being formidably themselves, they are something else, and the Green Knight—of enormous abundance of energy is also an embodiment of the Life Force. This embodiment is achieved by the poet realizing him powerfully as a great Tree (the best symbol of the Life Force) as much as a huge man.

> Fro the swyre to the swange—so sware and so thik,
> And his lyndes and his lymes—so long and so grete . . .
> (Though) of bak and of brest—al were his bodi sturne,
> Both his wombe and his wast—were worthily smale.[8]
>
> [ll. 138-139; 143-144]

And he compares the 'tulk's' hair and beard to a tree's foliage:

> Fayre fannand fax—umbefeldes his schulderes;
> A much berd as a busk—over his brest hanges,
> That wyth his highlich here—that of his hed reches
> Wats evesed al unbetorne—abof his elbowes.[9]
>
> [ll. 180-184]

And when he laughs he is like a tree tossing in a passing wind.

Gawain accepts the challenge. But the beheaded Green Knight 'runyschly' leaps 'to his lufly head', holds it up so that it 'lifts up its eye-lids and talks', and boisterously rides out carrying it. He is as superbly unconcerned, indeed all the more vigorous, for his beheading as a tree is for its pollarding.

It is this Life-force, inhabiting all persons, however much the aggregate is represented by the Green Man, (or the Lord of Bercilak as he is in the third Fitt), that prompts Sir Gawain on three occasions to take *limited* advantage of the lady who, using all allurements, visits him in his bed-chamber while her Lord is serving the principles of productive life by pruning away the surplus of destructive animals in his hunting, restoring the balance of Nature's economy. In the face of this temptation, it is the Catholic and courtly discipline, acting through Gawain, that limits his takings to a kiss, and that, both for the sake

[8]Swere—neck; swange—waist; sware—massive; lyndes—loins; wombe—stomach.

[9]Fannand—fanning; fax—hair; evesed—clipped; unbetorne—round in a circle.

of politeness, and because the discipline controls but cannot extirpate instincts. It disciplines through restraint the sexual instinct which—entirely uncontrolled—acts as much against the interests of Nature as of human society.

The symbolism of the Green Knight is completed when the subject of Gawain's long quest is found to be less a chapel than a holed mound or cave beside a gushing stream:

> A balg berg bi a bonke—the brymme bisyde,
> Bi a fors of a flode—that ferked thare;
> The borne blubred therinne—as hit boyled hade . . .
> Hit hade a hole on the ende—and on ayther syde,
> And overgrowen with gresse—in glodes aywhere,
> And all wats holw inwith—nobot an olde cave,
> Or a crevisse of an olde cragge.[10]

Of this 'grene chapelle' Gawain says:

> This oritore is ugly—with erbes overgrowen . . .
> Hit is the corsedest kyrk—that ever I com inne.

Nevertheless, this is the chapel; as the object of his Quest it is the source and sanctuary of generation. It is the sepulchre to which Life retreats in winter and from which it resurrects, after penitential and lenten seeming death, which is in fact a renewal, in the spring. It is both divine and magic, 'holy and enchanted' by which the water of life 'blubred'.[11] Here the Green Knight is sharpening the axe of initiation, the sound whereof 'wharred and whette as water at a mulne'.

IV

The seasonal myth urging the work does not contradict or subdue its Catholic intensity. The Church's rituals, especially and appropriately the sacrifice of the Mass, are made beautiful and intrinsic to the poem. The Christian calendar indeed reflects and absorbs the yearly rhythm and has incorporated many pagan festivals. More important: the renewal of the year and the letting of blood, implied by the beheading match, and Gawain's initiation into the attendant mysteries (the crux of the poem) are Christ's nativity and circumcision mirrored. It is this cohesion of Catholic doctrine and pagan myth that is so convincingly obtained in the poem. Therefore the opposition between knightly society and wild nature is presented, and then solved, by showing the decorative and Christian court of Arthur, not as a thing rebutting life energy, but as a patrician level within life's hierarchy, wherein primal energy is contained, disciplined and explicated in exquisite human design. It is a court that pays homage to primal energies in, for example, the ordered, hence patterned, licence of its Christian game of amorous forfeits. But, that the virtuous courtier and wild Nature, extremes within the hierarchy of Life, are in sympathy, share related conditions of being, is revealed

[10]Balg—bulgy; brymme—water's edge; borne—burn (stream).
[11]Cf. G. Wilson Knight's interpretation of *Kubla Khan* in *The Starlit Dome*.

by the sad and terrifying bleakness of the mountainous territory through which Gawain travels and which reflects his own low, lonely and empty season.

The hero undergoes two tests. One involves maintenance of troth and courage in the beheading ordeal at the Green Chapel; the other involves the refusal of the Lady's advances in the name of chastity while maintaining courtesy. The two themes are connected by the Green Girdle, the acceptance of which he conceals and with which he is humbled by the Green Knight, not because the issue of the second test was only partially successful, but because Gawain's refusal to confess the inevitable—that success could only be partial—was a fault of *seeing*, or—pushed further—was an obliquity towards Life. On Gawain, to his chagrin, relating his adventure on return to Camelot, Arthur, with careless good-humour, orders his whole court to wear green baldrics henceforth. It appears that Gawain with all his chivalry, Arthur and his court with all their refinement, are still nevertheless human, owing chivalry and refinement precisely to their humanity. Sharing his humanity, the court makes this 'slight fault' of its representative as much a matter of humble and amused recognition as shame, and in that is their pride, too. The colour—green—of the girdle is signficant: with all their Catholic civilization and chivalry Arthur and his court are alike vessels of the life instinct which, with the assistance of grace, they can make beautiful in its working.

The poem then speaks that Catholic sacramental view of life which Puritanism was to vitiate.

It offers a complete survey of life, divine and profane, natural and social, and of all things, as investitures of Grace. The synthesis is too absolute for the poem to become an 'allegory'. It is a Romance, non-didactic, and yet moral through its dressing of truth. The reader responds to the hero, because Gawain's success is an example of the reader's own possibilities of integration, and of identity with life-fulfilment conditional on recognition of Life's rhythms.

Vigour, archness (especially that of the Lady when trying to seduce Gawain), hardship, vivacity, virtue and suspense are set in the pattern, and carried the length of the poem's circuit with a cavalier insouciance and assurance, and with a ringing definition of image and in a brisk supple verse.

Moreover, the humour, the amused fascination of the writer with his poem, is pervasive. As a sample of this there is the description of the two ladies (the younger was Gawain's wooer, the other was Morgan la Fay) at the Castle of Bercilak:

> Thenne lyst the lady—to loke on the knyght,
> Thenne com of hir closet—with mony cler burdes.
> Ho wats the fayrest in felle,—of flesche and of lyre,
> And of compas and colour—and costes, of alle other;
> And wener than Wenore—as the wyghte thoght;
> An other lady hir lad—bi the lyft honde,
> That wats alder then ho,—an auncian hit semed,
> And heghly honowred—with hatheles aboute.

Bot unlyke on to loke—the ladyes were,
For if the yonge wats yep—yolwe wats that other;
Riche red on that on—rayled ayquere,
Rugh ronkled chekes—that other on rolled;
Kerchofes of that on—with mony cler perles,
Hir brest and hir bryght throte—bare displayed,
Schon schyrer than snawe—that schedes on hilles;
That other wyth a gorger—wats gered over the swyre,
Chymbled over hir blake chyn—with chalkquyte vayles,
Her frount folden in sylk—enfoubled ayquire,
Toret and treieted—with tryfles aboute,
That noght wats bare of that burde—bot the blake broghes,
The tweyne iyen and the nase,—the naked lyppes,
And those were soure to se—and sellyly blered;
A mensk lady on molde—mon may hir calle, for Gode!
Hir body wats schort and thik,
Hir buttokes balg and brode,
More lyyekwys on to lyk
Wats that scho hade on lode.[11]

[ll. 941-969]

There is little need for distinguishing the one whose enticing charms Gawain so nobly resisted!

v

The Old English alliterative measure, here increased by an extra foot before the cæsura, is used with fine effect. The combinations of rising and falling half-lines permit wide rhythmic variation. The 'block' (that is the main group of long lines heading the 'Wheel') varies between twelve and thirty-eight lines. By contrasting and expanding on this scale—concertina-wise—the poet avoids the monotony of the progression of line units into which Anglo-Saxon verse tends to fall, and secures something approaching the plasticity of the Miltonic paragraphs. The 'block' follows the various excitations of the temperament of the poem.

The rhyming 'wheel' is started by the 'bob', a line of only two syllables, one of which is stressed, and which is connective, with an echo-like effect comparable to the repetition of the last word or phrase of folk song, to the refrain proper.

The Wheel is analagous to the refrain of folk songs except that it advances narrative instead of marking time. In addition to affording relief to the preceding group of long lines it acts as a spring in that it periodically winds up energy which is let loose with a plosive force in the first line of the following stanza.

Apart from the evidence of language it seems certain, from the kind of mind engaged in the works, that the North-West Arch-poet who wrote *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* also composed *Purity, Patience* and *Pearl,* and that these were earlier productions of that development which reached satisfaction in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight.*

[11]Ho—she; burde—female; lyre—face; wener than Wenore—fairer than Guinevere; hatheles—nobles; yep—young; swyre—neck; treieted—tricked up; sellyly—marvellously; balg—bulging; lykkewys—pleasant; lyk—taste.

LLEWELYN POWYS

A Village Radical

W. GORE ALLEN

TO write of a creative artist's thought, tangible in the work which he produced and which has been made public, is to be faced by an array of problems. As a gardener, wishing to grow vegetables and flowers of many kinds on one small plot, must economize in space, follow a sound rotation, and then neglect no colouring or flavour, so must the critic give a wise proportion to each facet of his subject and leave nothing out.

It is this balance which is attained so rarely. When the subject is an author, he may have been notable chiefly because his manner of expression was arresting; and it is then upon that style critics will tend to focus—often at the cost of thought which lay behind it. Meredith is an obvious instance of the stylist recalled by mannerisms, perhaps useful at the time but now much best forgotten. Meredith was not Gibberish Park, more than any too rich gentleman is the pretentious façade which he designs: Meredith is the poet of sublimated passion, the Radical whose reforms were all accomplished; Christian society, thriftless of its capital, brought face to face with Nietzsche.

It is enough to say what Meredith *was,* and therefore what any other serious writer may well be, to be confronted by the critic's major problem. For, when he has become clear in his own mind that style, together with all things incidental to his subject, is not of much account, he is moving at once in a realm of pure ideas. Whereas before he would have attributed too little to his subject, he may now assign too much. Furthermore, the need for a wise balance exists no less in the realm of ideas than in the field of technics. For example: while such authors as Llewelyn Powys are not philosophers, in the sense that they follow Plato or Aristotle to a logical conclusion, their books do teach a definite philosophy of life. Put them into the hands of a trained philosopher, and the critical balance would be shattered. He, being so skilled at finding flaws, would not leave an inch of masonry undamaged. . . .

If Powys would be harmed by dialectic experts, amateur pleaders could do him even greater damage. For he was a man who felt many abstract causes, and felt them strongly. He could be quoted with great effect against the Church, landlordism, Conservatism, Communism, Fascism, and Christian marriage. With equal effect, he could be quoted in support of Liberalism, American democracy, racial equality, sexual liberty (but never sexual licence), and living in the country.

The chief danger is not that abstractions in these two groups will be artificially opposed, but rather that one or more on either side may

be emphasized unduly. Both orthodox moralists and experimentalists have seen in Powys a writer who was pre-occupied with sex, as though this were his only passion, and the thirst for justice which he discerned and reverenced in Roosevelt had been a passing fancy. He cannot be apprized completely without reference to his teaching about sex; but he cannot be judged at all without studying his idea of justice.

Once the critical field has been limited to the broad ideas with which an author was concerned, and on which he therefore reached his own conclusions, we are bound to ask whether these were universals—independent at least of narrow time—or whether they belonged merely to the author's generation, making no sense outside a limited historical perspective. For, if there are but few writers who escape from the centuries in which they worked—Hardy as a novelist is one of the small number—there are some so fettered to a single decade that they seem to have been afflicted with a kind of mental and emotional stasis. Who can read Galsworthy unless he has savoured the intangible 'freedom' of the 'twenties, or Graham Greene unless he too was wounded by the industrial squalor of the 'thirties?

It is when Powys is examined in this light that he emerges as a true eccentric. The fashions of his day neither shaped his philosophy directly, nor indirectly, by driving him into conscious opposition. Dittany of *Love and Death* could have moved with equal grace in a mediæval folk-tale, a seventeenth-century ballad, an eighteenth-century romance, or a Victorian novel. She is dated only by her author's comments and asides, and these could be removed without detracting a line from her character or a breath from her life's story. Without them, she is Jefferies's Amaryllis or any other authentic country girl in fiction; yet woven into the age-old situation of a woman who is faithless directly her man steps out of sight.

Of the author who can create timeless but none-the-less real people, it may be assumed that his judgement of events is not likely to be clouded by contemporary fear, or by the clamour to which that fear gives rise. This was truly so with Powys, and more especially when a long illness and keen financial struggles had refined a mentality always eccentric and mature. From what was to prove his deathbed, he passed judgement on the political experiments in Germany and Russia; and in both cases that judgement was the same. Because both National Socialism and Communism exercised despotic power over the human intellect and imagination, taking from man a dignity which was his birthright, both were 'damnable opinions', and both had at all costs to be resisted.

In this matter it does not strike us that Powys was particularly wise, since subsequent events have forced us unconsciously to share his wisdom. Yet it is not a case of our being wise after the event: between the time when Powys wrote and the present moment no article of the Communist belief has been revealed which has not always been quite clear for any man to study. All that we have to go upon which Powys

lacked are a few events—in the Balkans and Central Europe—events implicit in Communist belief, and therefore always possible to forecast.

The difference here between Powys and his contemporaries is that they for the most part accepted an either/or, and he refused it. Either a Communist state had to be supported in order to crush a National Socialist state, or National Socialism had to be tolerated in order that Communism should be defeated. Although, in its outward actions, the West shied away from this dilemma, the reality which it had assumed in most men's minds became quite plain directly Germany attacked the Soviet Union. Then French and British popular opinion gave voice to a judgement which it had made long ago in secret: that Communism was the lesser evil; that it was good in intention and only too precipitant in execution; that there could easily exist a 'give and take' between itself and other systems.

The fact that this opinion has now, in the light of Communist activities, been taken back does not mean that the public has become more moral; it means only that the fear of Germany was greater at one moment and the fear of Russia at another. There is no ethic in question and no principle at stake.

It was in his repudiation of the belief that good can flow from evil, while evil remains itself, that Powys established his right to be regarded as a moralist; just as it is their acceptance of this belief which condemns the public and statesmen of the West to be regarded as immoral. Had Powys been a Christian, or even a Deist, there would have been nothing remarkable in the judgement he delivered. The conscience of Europe is religious; no amount of fear ever has slain it, or ever will; and those who are at war with it, no less than those in whom it dwells, understand quite clearly that all human quarrels are theological in essence and at root.

By refusing to take seriously Powys's complete denial of Christian faith, we should waive aside his claim that he approached human problems with 'high seriousness', and render truth itself a grave disservice. For Christianity and the type of Liberalism which Powys represented have not only to live together; they have also to work towards those ends which they in common recognize as good.

If the practical difficulties which hamper such a partnership are many, the emotional difficulties are more formidable still. Liberalism is the child of Christianity, and a child who from the day of its birth has been rebellious. Yet, being of the family by blood, it cannot but pursue, even against its personal inclinations, those aims which the family exists to further. At the most inopportune moments for itself, it feels instinctively the family recoil from sin, the family indignation towards tyrants, the family pity for the weak, and the family hungering for justice. But against all such instincts it is armed; even in the act of succumbing on one point, it will resist more firmly on another, and a reconciliation amongst kindred is the very last thing which it desires.

projection was being made without the least appeal to logic; for logic would have shown at once that, whereas landlordism did not rest directly upon the consent of the governed, no movement could succeed in a proletarian age unless the masses approved it and co-operated with it. While the political Left in Western Europe was inventing its own 'Hitler Legend'—the legend of German masses subdued by a detested tyrant—Powys understood that National Socialism was a popular religion, differing in name alone from its Communist counterpart in Russia.

In an Englishman of that time such clarity of judgement is surprising. Powys himself had few of those contacts with European culture which might have enabled him to understand a mode of thought and life, disrupted by the new dynamic movements. Contrasted with that of such a contemporary English novelist as Maurice Baring, his personal background was insular in the extreme. He spoke no foreign language, possessed no kindred in diplomacy or the world of international letters; and his early travels were confined to a search for health in Switzerland and a lecture tour in the United States. Apart from the years of the first World War, which he spent on his brother's farm in Africa, his existence was that of any clergyman's son who was not strong enough to enter a profession but who had a compensating gift for writing and an eye for natural beauty.

Development in such a setting is most frequently provincial. It is not impossible to picture Powys, but for the use of character and grace, hob-nobbing with other disgruntled intellectuals; urging the young men of his district not to resist aggression; demonstrating a few years later in favour of a 'second front'; telling from Labour platforms in the 1945 election how the war had resulted from a world-wide conspiracy amongst the 'upper classes'. Such antics would not have harmed him as a writer. On the contrary, they would have ensured for his books a far wider circulation than they in fact enjoyed. For the literary rake's progress was in fashion. There were many English authors who began as democrats and liberals; who would not believe that the masses were capable of making a wrong choice; who, rejecting the doctrine of original sin, needed to invent a scapegoat for that potential evil which resides in every human spirit.

It may be argued that here too much importance is attached to political incidents and movements, of which few authors pretend to first-hand knowledge, and which they therefore merely judge in passing. The writer's task, at any rate in fiction, is to capture and portray that which other men discern but dimly, and which they would perceive in a form at once extended and distilled. So long as he presents his characters and situations truly, does it matter if his errors are those of which the general public is being guilty? In short: would *Love and Death* have been a lesser work of art if Powys *had* attributed the Nazi Revolution to the landlords or praised the Russians for their timely bombing of Helsinki?

This is a vital question, both for the author and his critics. If the

answer is that falsehood may be tolerable so long as it is well presented, the divorce between æsthetics and the rest of human knowledge has become absolute. Henceforth the pursuit of beauty will lie within the province of one man and the pursuit of truth within the province of another. They will never meet. Indeed, their ultimate union will no longer be desired.

Whatever other follies he committed, Powys consistently rejected this divorce. Even his very early work—essays written for the Dorset papers—shows what he believed to be the writer's function. It was to be: first, patient understanding of the world in which he lived; secondly, comment on the ideas being shaped and the actions undertaken by his own society. In none of his books was a line written purely for entertainment or a sentence addressed to an élite.

Powys does much to raise the reader's mind from preoccupations petty and material, and to set it questing out for supernatural truth. Perhaps it is only in England that he would have been allowed to do so. For the English are peculiarly undaunted by the labels which the articulate amongst them choose to wear, and supremely quick to discern the message of the heart beneath the pain and waste of intellectual growth. It is not for his adolescent judgement of the Christian faith, or even as an 'Old Radical', that Powys is remembered: already he had been placed in the company of those few national artists who portray the beauty of their country, the integrity of its traditions, and the strong mental and emotional life of those who still work upon its land.

PALESTRINA'S 'MISSA ASSUMPTA EST'

The resonant beauty of the bells of thought
Chime out of time and stream
Through woods and valleys of the air
Lifting the hearts of men like flowers
Drifting in birds of praise through variance of light
Then fall through all dimensions of the soul
Then fall like hours.

J. B. PICK

ÆGEAN STORM

KAY CICELLIS

A FEW days ago a terrible accident had happened. They had both been present, so that now, sitting in the living-room in the middle of the cold night, they had not even the comfort of asking questions, of talking it over until the horror dissolved in description and details.

An oil lamp stood between them, and in their silent, frightened preoccupation their eyes often came back to it. The cook and the peasants had disappeared hours ago; they were silent with sleep, and remote. But the two of them before the lamp could not slip away yet, could not meet sleep with this inacceptance in their hearts.

Yet it was foolish, absurd, he thought impatiently, foolish to be still affected by this thing after three whole days. But as long as she looked at the lamp in that way he could neither move nor talk. She had taken it much more to heart than he. It haunted her

A man had died.

A man had died; what did it mean? He was not sure now. Only for one small vacant moment, when the man had dropped out of sight like a stone in a well, had he known what it meant. There had been a flash, aching perhaps, he could not remember, and something large and clear had written itself in the cavity of his mind: this is death. Afterwards, all had been confusion.

He lay far back in his armchair and fixed his eyes on the ceiling in the hope of recapturing the completeness of the event. Many times since the day of the accident he had hoped like this, and tried. But afterwards he had been very tired.

It had been so cold that day. They had gone fishing with three of the peasants, and their own special peasant, their friend Anghelos. They had gone fishing near the rocks of the lighthouse, where the strongest winds blew.

It had been so cold, that day. When they first stepped out of the house, he straightened up and opened his mouth wide to the cold, as usual. But that day he could not keep it up. He shrivelled up and contracted from the very start, and walked on with head and back bent, as if to protect a fragile flame hidden inside his jacket; a small spot of warmth that had to be covered, hovered over. All the way to the lighthouse he had crouched over his small lonely warmth, feeling old.

The wind was very sharp; the rocks sharp too, the pointed, bristling rocks of the lighthouse that pierced through the soles of their boots. The wind blew and flapped, and beat the coldness into a solid thing, like snow compressed into ice.

The lighthouse was deserted. It was not in use now; ships did not

pass that way any more; a blind lighthouse watching over a dead itinerary. They walked down to the sea; its colour was bright, in spite of the roughness and grey sky, but associated with the coldness it seemed evil.

The men prepared the dynamite; it was an old custom left over by the war, this fishing with dynamite. When the sea was rough and they could not put the boat to sea, they threw German dynamite from the shore, then dived in to gather the fish risen to the surface from the explosion. They were silent. Only Anghelos spoke; he had an eager disposition, at all times. There was an eagerness in his movements and in his speech, and it was always fresh. Now and then he stopped talking and sang something to the waves. He did not help the men, he did not bother about such things.

During the whole preparation, she sat on the edge of a rock, looking around dazedly as if she were here for the first time. She did not move, only when the thin white men dived into the water, she gave a strong, short shiver.

He also watched from a rock as they splashed towards the fish floating on the water, white bellies upturned and gleaming. The salt spume on his lips tasted bitter.

Anghelos swam ahead of the rest, eager and young and splashing; at moments one could still hear his song. Then all of a sudden, he stopped and looked round in a startled manner, and turned back to the rock from which they had dived. Yet there was no white-bellied fish caught between his teeth, none clutched in his fumbling hands. What was Anghelos doing then without the triumph of glistening captives in his hands? What was Anghelos doing in this body that swam so heavily, so clumsily towards retreat?

They looked on numbly, without interest. 'I'm not even going to ask him why he came back', he thought. It was so cold. He was obsessed by the absurd idea that if he sat very still on the rock with motionless insistence, he might generate a small roundness of warmth, he might hatch a beautiful egg of warmth underneath him. But he had to get rid of Anghelos's clumsiness first; it was in the way; he must see him standing on the rock at last, liberated from the ugly, annoying defeat. Then he could go back to hatching his egg. This did not happen, however. Anghelos came very near the rock, but the thing was not completed. He stopped short ('but what *is* he doing?') and began to sink fast, like a straight, heavy dagger going to the heart of the sea. For one very brief moment the green transparence of the upper layers of water allowed them to see that his face was very white, bloodless. But that was all; he went down very swiftly and quietly, where the layers were no more transparent, where the sea became mystery and darkness.

Her voice rang out in alarm: 'Where is Anghelos?'

The other men lifted their heads from the water then, and realized that something was wrong; they came splashing back to the rock. One of them shouted: 'Where has he gone? I can't see him anywhere'.

And although he perfectly remembered what had taken place, he answered: 'I don't know. I don't know where he is'.

Suddenly the air was poignant with the absence of Anghelos; he blindly longed to hear his voice; at the same time he understood Anghelos was dead. Two simultaneous blows, the longing, and the certitude; not detached, but strictly part of each other. Such passionate longing to hear his voice only could be met with his being dead.

Afterwards the whole thing had broken into pieces; now that he lay in the living-room remembering, he tried to amalgamate them within one powerful clasp, but the pieces fell away, and there remained only the effort; the contraction of the clasp, and exasperation. He lost the thread. In the centre, muffled and blunt, there existed the memory of the cold, and of raw, naked death congealed and walled-up in it, like a frog enclosed intact in a piece of ice; there was only this, and around it the other gestures, the words, the necessities that had followed the event played a silent, slippery hide-and-seek.

They said it had been his heart. And now he felt for himself the coldness of the sea gathering round the red panting heart and strangling it to death, like a frog in the ice. The cold hurt exceedingly; he knew it, because his fingers had been frozen that day; he remembered the gradual swelling and hardening, as if all his blood had streamed to the extremities of his fingers and was about to burst through the pores; he remembered how unfamiliar the swollen contours had been to him. While helping the men, he had accidentally hit his fingers against a rock; the pain of it had been dull and tingling, strongly compressing his flesh and at the same time making a great effort to burst through the flesh. All this was part of the death of Anghelos, part of the coldness in which his death was imprisoned.

So night after night, in spite of the warm living-room, they remained under the slow pressure of the cold, with the memory of that death. They could not help each other. The warmth of the room, the reciprocal warmth of their bodies lay in another circle which they could not enter. Jammed tight in the frigid obsession, they were made inactive, useless.

Yet to-night he rose from his prison and paced across it with a new, grim boldness. 'I will think of the death, repeatedly, in good order', he thought, 'until I have sucked all the dread away from it, and digested it'. He drew to him firmly the lighthouse, the rocks, the sea which had been wild and green, yet transparent enough to let one see the whiteness of a man's face sinking. Perhaps Anghelos had not suffered much; his arms had been limp, his body quiet; he had not kicked and struggled in defence. This thought had not occurred to him before. Now it grew more obvious every moment that Anghelos had not found time to feel the agony of drowning; it did not exactly comfort him, because he was not really concerned with Anghelos at the moment, owing to the fascination of the experiment he had begun. Here was a new thought, which broke the fixity of the obsession.

Then he asked himself whether there had been any fish. He could not remember—had they caught any fish after the explosion? Yes, there must have been. When they had set out, one of the men had said there would surely be very many fish, there were always fish at the lighthouse. Also, when Anghelos had splashed ahead youthfully, he had thought: 'Anghelos, you must catch that fish, perhaps not quite dead, that large pink fish over there, ducking under each wave. That fish must be caught by you. It is surely the largest one'. And he had urged him on intensely with his heart.

So there had been fish. He began to feel an interest in the story; he glimpsed the possibility of a thousand aspects and treatments. It was no longer the thing that flew in and out of the gloom like a bat, but a fact lying in his hands, under the clear brain-light, to be turned over and transposed at will. Release had come, a real victory this time, not the substitute escape, which left only shame and fear of being caught again.

The wind blew around the house, and he thought of the sea away out there, alone with the wind; he thought of it, handsome and mysterious, doing strange things with the wind. 'I was not allowed to think of the sea (the sea in which Anghelos was drowned)', he objected, 'especially at night'. But it was the kind of objection one used only to make the other person repeat an affirmation to which one has already secretly agreed.

Then the place was thronged thick with thoughts, the ones he had disowned, the ones which were now to be excavated and made crystal clear. After three days of slumber a great appetite leapt awake in his brain; the brain wanted to knead and grind; it remembered the innumerable operations it could do. It could find meanings to things which had none, sever things from their usual significance and substitute a new one, or try to see how things looked without any meaning at all. A stray thought could be captured and followed back from whence it came, until the trail brought one deep into the heart of a tangled wealthiness, flavoured with the reality of dreams. There he would discover the intimacy of himself. And at this point he felt such joy that he leapt to his feet and went near her, ready to absorb her in a very deep embrace.

But when he came, she only glanced up at him indifferently. She looked hard and angular; there was no warmth and gladness for her.

'Don't be like that', he asked of her.

She smiled, but there was still that greyness. She refused to look at his gladness and supply herself with it. Could she not hear how the sea sang in the night?

He lifted her heavy hair and nestled his chin in the small pool of warmth hidden at the back of her neck. But she looked away from him with a little frown; the lamp took her back. He waited in silence. How nice, how nice the living-room is, he thought. He had not known he possessed the wonderful freedom of travelling from one armchair to another and picking up various attitudes from the depths of them,

like clothes, each one making him see the lamp and her profile in a different manner; he could also lie down on the carpet if he liked, expand and spread out like a carpet himself; there is a carpet in the living-room on which one can lie down, he thought. What spaciousness, what comfort, what bliss. Then upstairs there was his room; he did not mind leaving the living-room and going to his room, but he did not object to staying here either and not going up at all. He knew a sweet place would be found for peace and amusement wherever he went. She must come along too.

He took her hand, as in the days when he used to tear her away from the house for a walk in the rain. But having finished his light-hearted travels round the room, he received a shock of surprise on seeing that still there was no gladness in her. She is thinking again of the day we went fishing, he thought; and he glanced back at the day himself, and thoughtlessly exclaimed: 'But think, we were really mad to go fishing in January, with the wind blowing so cold and our fingers numb (remember how wretched we felt) as if it were a necessity. I'm certain we didn't really feel like going. Tell me, why on earth did we go fishing?'

She looked at him, and he saw that in her mind she was repeating: why? Then she flung up her head with a little unbelieving smile: 'I really don't know why'. She leaned back and slowly rubbed her shoulders against the armchair; laughing softly to herself, she repeated: 'I don't know—it's absurd, but I don't know'.

He said: 'See, I've got chilblains from that day', and offered her his hands. She took them, gently, mockingly, and as their heads came close they looked up and recognized each other, and felt momentarily safe.

* * *

At the window a miserable little tree flapped its thin branches in the wind like a wounded bird trying to take flight. What did one do on such days? He looked up from his desk and for a brief, paralysed moment could not remember whether it was morning or afternoon; there were no shadows to guide him, the light was white and meaningless. In summer one had only to glance at the shadow of the giant mimosa-tree to know what time of the day it was. Who would even know it was a mimosa-tree now? Now all hours were alike, there were no hours. From time to time a gust of wind, like fever.

The house was filled with acrid, stagnant smoke. They must be using wet wood in the kitchen; and suddenly the thought that they had not been able to keep the wood safe from the outside dampness and misery, the thought that it had infiltrated everywhere, even in the clean, prosperous provision of wood, made him cower behind his desk, feeling bare and unprotected; he was now at the mercy of the air, which was no longer natural emptiness, but existed, heavy and very large, swollen with a sinister presence. The air was a number of silent, vaporous faces floating in and out of branches, through the

ceilings and the walls. He shivered. He could not sit here alone and idle while the helpless tree knocked at the window; at any moment perhaps, the wind would break into the house and take complete possession. How fragile the house became all of a sudden.

He caught a glimpse of the sea as he passed the window on his way out. It was half-hidden by the distracted trees, green and grey and swollen, the horizon-line much higher than usual; he could hear its roar at intervals, and he shivered again as it reached him, because of the foreigness of inhuman sounds when they grow powerful, away from us, by themselves.

Oh, that sea! Perhaps it was going to flood the country. 'And the body of Anghelos has not yet been washed ashore. Anghelos's body is still in there, lost.' He hurried out of the room.

Where was she? Late at night yesterday, they had looked at each other, and there had been a certain mellowness and closeness. He had felt her breath, and it had been the breath of a human being after all these winds and seas and deaths. The windows had been closed; there had been no 'outside'. The sea had been so far away that it had seemed to be singing.

'Let us close the windows and light the lamp, and look at each other again.'

He found her in the kitchen, helping the cook. He was relieved to find there was a cook in the house, a third person. He had been exiled in an uninhabited world; but fortunately, there was also the cook.

He stepped over to the stove, longing for some fire. But the two women had not yet begun cooking the food. There was no fire. 'Where did all that smoke come from, then? From the peasants' kitchen next door?' he asked them; but it did not matter; here was no fire. He opened the dark sooty oven and discovered a great heap of pale ashes waiting to be cleared away. 'If the wind comes into the house as I foretold, the ashes will take flight and spread in the air; they will float in every room, then fall silently on our shoulders, pale, tasteless, and dead.' He closed the oven hastily.

'Go now, you're in the way', said his wife impatiently. She was hard and pinched this morning; he wanted to make a little incision in her white cheek to see whether any blood would come out.

He drifted away to the dining-room, from the dining-room to the hall—and then?

His wife called out to him, perhaps remorseful for not having accepted him: 'Shall I get you some hot coffee?'

'I don't want any coffee. But couldn't we light the lamps now?'

* * *

'The silence has spread still further,' he thought. 'The day drags on. The wind rages outside, but no sound comes through the closed windows. Such muteness is uncanny. And there stand the tall cypress

trees, swaying to and fro resignedly, like thin, black widows lamenting, without voice.'

The day drags on. There is nothing to say. One stares at the words without using them. There is a muffledness in the air; and the cat, the cold, inhuman cat crouches motionless on the window-sill, not meditating, but petrified.

On a day like this Anghelos would have known what to do—would have gone out in the coppice to cut wood with a great swinging axe.

* * *

They did not sit together in the living-room that evening.

After supper she messed about with various things, plates, napkins, forks, then said she was going to bed because she had a headache.

'I shall have to take the lamp with me', she announced pitilessly, 'all the others have been sent to the village to be repaired. I'll call out to you to come and take it as soon as I've finished.'

He stared at her, aghast; he wanted to move and talk to her, ask her to remove the unbearable announcement, but he could not; his words would be feathers, would not reach the target but flutter to the ground about her. She was enclosed in a shell, and his movements were of no importance.

Yet once he had been able to make her laugh with delight; once he had made her eyelids beat, and she had called his name with something like a bell in her voice.

But she knew nothing of all this, and walked out of the room with the lamp in her hand, leaving him in complete darkness.

* * *

He dreamt of her that night; that she loved him very much. She said nothing, but her love was there. They were in a small room which he had never known before, but which was somehow warm and familiar; there was a dim golden light diffused in it, leaving the ceiling in shadow. A strange spiral silence unfurled around them and she glided through the silence towards him; the movement of her shadow was poignant like thin violin-music; afterwards something opened wide to receive him. He did not see her, there was only her shadow on the wall; yet her presence had never been felt so much.

He woke up in a warmth of old blankets, and of love; but it was cruel to emerge, sheathed in diffused gold, into a room of stale grey light and winter stillness. It was dawn; dawn surrounded the bed and the isolated furniture like cold waters. In this disaster the golden diffusion began to leave him; it evaporated imperceptibly from invisible fissures in his body; it became a small whiff, a wisp filtering into the air outside him. He could evoke it, it still came to him, brief and deep, but it could not be touched; a glass sheet had been inserted in between.

So he had to watch it slipping away, leaving him with the steadfast

furniture and the white sky staring in at the window absent-mindedly. He crept under the bedclothes in a daze of misery. He had thought it could not be taken away from him. Waking up at dawn was unreal, and lonely. If only she would come and see him. It seemed ages since they had last met. If only she came—perhaps she would bring something golden with her. But she did not come.

* * *

He knew she must be in the kitchen, but he did not find any certitude, any stability in this knowledge. The thought wavered, almost blew out, then hesitatingly flickered back to life again. Why don't I go and find her, he thought, but the question only threw him back into cowering impotence. He could not go near her; since yesterday night something kept her away from him, probably even she was not conscious of it. There could be no movement towards her, no easy gliding of shadows as in last night's happy, silent dream. To go to her was like swimming against the current; he had not the strength. Opposition, resistance was not a stimulant to him; it was a power that commanded immediate, absolute capitulation.

He was at his desk again. Suddenly he pushed back his chair in rebellion and astonishment. What was the matter? What was it about? Perhaps she was ill, or unhappy. She was hiding a hurt; she always liked to be proud about her unhappiness. But what was there to make her unhappy in this place? No, no such thing in this still house, in these listless, uncertain days of mid-winter. There could be no pain. Only boredom, depression, perhaps, because the white sky pressed so insistently at the window, giving one the impression of being constantly watched. No unhappiness here, he thought, but his anxiety did not give way. And still he could not go to her; somehow he was afraid not to find her there.

So he waited for lunchtime. His restlessness grew; he thought of nothing else. It was a modest hope this time; surely nothing could come and frustrate their meeting at lunchtime.

* * *

When she entered the dining-room, a bunch of keys clasped in her fist, he did not realize that this was what he had been waiting for during the long morning hours. She sat opposite him, and cut bread with a tired yet firm hand, with eyes patient, yet cold and hard. There existed, then, a patience which was not meek and white, which did not mean surrender, tolerance flowing evenly and continuously. There were no angels in this patience; it was only impatience grown stale and still; such was her patience now as she sat cutting bread in thick slices.

So she was here, it was lunchtime, the time he had longed for with such hard pain. His great wish had been answered. Yet, no, it was a deception, for she had come and he had not understood it. Nothing good, nothing wonderful had come to him with her arrival, only a

dullness of frustration, the sensation of having missed the whole thing irreparably. It had wriggled away unnoticed, too quick for him. He found her seated before him at last, but in reality it was all over already, it was too late.

He asked nothing of her; vaguely he thought: 'Afterwards, after lunch, then—' as if lunch, with the plates and the forks and the food were the great obstacle to be overcome before anything could happen between the two of them. In these difficult moments, it seemed, an ordinary knife and fork could occupy both mind and hands completely, and a plate filled with food could be as much in the way as a third person in the room.

They began a little conversation. She said easy, unnecessary things. 'We must send someone to the village, there are some things I need.'

Then he said (once they enjoyed making up elaborate menus for themselves): 'What'll we have for supper to-night?'

She answered: 'Fish'. Her knife slipped from her hand and she stooped to pick it up. Good, he thought, now we won't have to go on with the menu; she will get up to find another knife, and forget about it. I don't really care about the menu.

He left the table with a feeling of having eaten well; yet now that the meal was over and he had to leave the dining-room, he found a great hunger in him, as if the food had been unreal. He could not make out whether this hunger was spiritual or physical; before he had time to recognize it, however, it turned into a sickness, a weary satiety which did not come from hunger's fulfilment but from its extreme acuteness.

* * *

Late in the afternoon he remembered her again, needed her with a sudden violence, like someone waking up. So, as was his custom, he drifted to the kitchen, listless and without hope, yet hoping obstinately that he would find her this time.

The kitchen was empty; flies, half-asleep, hung on the window panes, taps dripped, a crooked pile of plates waiting to be washed, and in the air the chilly drab smell of extinguished logs. But the kitchen was not quite empty. Through a half-open door he saw a small room, and inside it the cook combing out her hair. It was a strange sight. The cook's hair had been tight, tidy, unchangeable, a yellow bun attached to her head all through life. And now she sat on a stool combing her long, long hair with slow rhythmical movements; it was unnatural.

'Where is my wife?' he asked her suddenly; his voice sounded frightened in his ears. He should not have said it so loud.

'In her room', said the cook, but she did not stop the slow motion of the comb in her inexplicably long hair.

He went up the stairs slowly, thinking: 'I don't suppose she is asleep, she never sleeps in the afternoon—not even in summer, when the noon hours are torrid and still'.

He reached her door in a mood of absent-mindedness; but on turning the door-handle he found that she had locked herself in. The shock paralysed him, he remained motionless with the enormity of his surprise, as if this had been a far more extraordinary event. This is very unexpected, he thought, his mind gaping, and he grew hot with anger for being so unprepared and having this locked door spring upon him so suddenly. He hated sudden things. Anghelos's death, too, had been very sudden.

He soon regained control, however, and told himself he was being foolish. He decided to try the door again; perhaps it was only jammed, not locked. As he did so he found his heart pounding away ridiculously in his throat. Good God, he whispered, and mechanically wiped the perspiration from his forehead. The door was really locked.

He stood before it for a while, wondering painfully what he ought to do. I can't just stand here, he thought, so he went and sat on the top step of the staircase, at a small distance from the door; it was a good idea, because his legs had become watery. Once settled there, he felt calmer, relieved that he did not have to try the door again. Then in a flash he saw himself crouching in this strange position, waiting on the staircase, like a child or a burglar or a spy, in front of the locked door of his wife's room, while the cook combed her hair in the obscure and deserted house, miles away. There was an absurdity about it all; it could not be believed, could not be taken seriously. He made as if to get up, but no, it would not change anything; it would not bring him back to the moment he had gone up the stairs, empty and comfortable, to see his wife. It was done now, he had sat down on the stairs and seen himself. So I might as well stay here, he said, and think things over. The door was locked; that was a clear and solid beginning. But then? When she had heard the door-handle rattle, why hadn't she opened the door and let him in? She had not moved. And the thought of her sitting motionless in the room while he rattled the handle seemed so queer, unreal that again his heart started beating madly away. Perhaps she had not heard, perhaps she was asleep. Why shouldn't she be sleeping? But a stubborn sentence kept repeating itself exasperatingly in his mind: 'She never sleeps in the afternoon', with such finality that he was not even allowed time to take a short rest upon this possible solution. And again he was stricken by the thought of her, wide awake and conscious, locked in her room and saying nothing.

Then a question he had not asked, an obvious, glaring question sprang in his mind: Why should she lock herself up in the first place? He had taken it for granted that she should have locked the door, he had only wondered why she would not unlock it. Now he saw where the problem lay. It dawned on him that she couldn't just be sitting idle behind that locked door. She was absorbed in a mysterious occupation that no one must know of. She had shut herself away because there was something she must do, all by herself.

But then he got up impatiently; the mystery began to get on his

nerves. It's nonsense, I am giving it too much importance, and before he had time to think, he was at the door, knocking loudly, calling out her name. But why was it that without meaning it his voice took this mournful interrogative tone? He called out again, keeping his voice carefully flat; yet it escaped at the end in the same interrogative distress. He waited, his voice echoing without interruption in his head. But he did not expect an answer now. If her voice answered Yes? from behind the door, he would not believe it, would not accept it; it would seem more absurd than any of the strange happenings of this afternoon.

There was nothing more to do. He had called out and she had not answered. The door was definitely locked. And now?

He tried to escape the urgency of the situation for the last time. Somewhere in the world out there, he remembered, there was music, noise, cities scintillating in the night, women's dresses, men's gatherings, walks on the wet street, evenings of great adventure. Yes, all this existed, and more of it further on that could not be expressed as clearly; he knew it, because it passed through him like an illuminated train. But he could not have it; there was music and adventure to be followed, but he must stand before a closed door, and solve it. He desired to go away and leave this bad situation behind him in a bulk. He wanted to emerge from the walls of the house, through the chimney like a wreath of smoke.

At this thought his mind took advantage of a little freedom, and broke into fantasies of the roof flying off like a lid, and himself floating out in the shape of a balloon, and then, immediately, another fantasy: a brief vision of his wife lying on the floor, face downwards and arms thrown out. It was so vivid, so precise that he even saw the separation of her hair on her thin nape, as each piece of hair fell on either cheek, revealing a small triangle of white flesh. That night in the living-room he had kissed the triangle, and it had been warm, downy. He started up, terrified. Why on earth did I see her like that? It can't only be imagination, it can't. And straight as an arrow came the certitude that the vision was true, that there could be nothing else but her inert body in the locked room. Perhaps she is dead; and the thought did not shock him for a moment. A new foreign logic took control of his mind and set to work rapidly. She had done something to herself. All day long to-day, yesterday, the day before, during three whole days in fact, a poison had been working within her. There was the night in the living-room, it was true, but it stood detached, meaningless. It had no connection with the locked room. So much had happened after that night that it did not seem to count now. One thought of it, but it could not affect the shape of these last three days. He could only remember how hard and bloodless she had been. He had waited for her and she had not come. He had seen her in his dream, golden and loving, yet she had betrayed that vision, escaped it unchanged. And no later than the other night, she had pitilessly taken away the lamp, leaving him in complete darkness, because she

had to hasten away and attend to this terrible thing within her, the devastation, the wound. And even to-day, he had met her in the dining-room after a passionate search, but she had not been there.

She had been so insignificant.

He had said: 'What will there be for supper to-night?' and she had answered ('details, details, proceed', he thought impatiently)—she had answered: 'Fish'. ('Yes, I think she said fish, no matter.')

She answered 'Fish', and her voice had been strange, flat. Now he was sure of it. Perhaps it had been so all through the meal, and he had only noticed it then? But the new logic persisted: No, it was when she said 'fish' that her voice went flat, dead, horrible. Then she had dropped her knife. Perhaps the word had reminded her of the fish Anghelos should have brought back in triumph through the waves on the day of his death. Again, a straight arrow of certitude. He felt an exaltation rising in him, tide-like; a feeling of advancing, progressing towards knowledge.

'But what has Anghelos to do with all this?' he cried suddenly.

No sooner had the exclamation left him than he knew that Anghelos had everything to do with it. It had been Anghelos from the start. It had been love for Anghelos, sorrow for Anghelos, death for Anghelos.

He remembered Anghelos. The young peasant who had been their friend; but that was not quite it; there was a different story. He tried to see him with her eyes, and what he discovered was new and exciting, yet familiar. He was not discovering her love for Anghelos, but remembering it as if it were a thing he had known.

His own life with her, which he had thought so special, a very personal possession, now appeared to him secretly filled with the presence of Anghelos. They had not been alone; Anghelos had been with them all the time.

He had shown them so many things; he knew the place far better than they, for he had lived there all his life. He had known that behind the stone fence by the well lived an ancient, persistent snake-nest, and that for some unknown reason in this particular corner of the vinefield the grapes grew heavier and sweeter. He had known the secrets of the weather—had often listened and questioned it attentively, receiving the answers deftly, without hesitation. He had shown them how to choose among the bitter plants growing wild in the fields some peculiar white roots that could be cooked and eaten. He had shown them how to light fires out of doors and make swinging beds from the strong elastic branches of the pine tree. He always had wonderful ideas, and offered them unassertively, as if they were suggested by the wind, the sea, or the night. It was he who had made life so beautiful at the country house. What else was there left for her but to love him?

When Anghelos had taken her hare-hunting in the expressionless earliness of winter afternoons, she had loved his long heavy strides over the dead leaves, and the sureness of his hand when he killed. On

winter nights, when they returned home from a walk to the village, she had loved his knowledge of the intricate paths through the fields, and his contempt of the prudent yellow lantern. In summer, she had loved him in the sea, so naturally naked; she had loved his disappearances under the green waters; when he emerged dripping, shimmering inhumanly, she had loved the mystery of his untold travels through the dangerous green land others could not reach. In the evenings, when the shepherds brought out the sheep, she had lain on huge heaps of hay, rustling and odorous, which he had prepared for her with his strange sudden tenderness. In the very early mornings, mistily radiant, he had woken her up to go and taste the plums before the dew left their skins. Another day, the pig had broken loose, and they had chased it through the garden and the courtyard with shrill delighted cries and she had laughed with him like a child.

And the nights. When the lamp stood in the middle of the table and the cook had finished washing the plates, he had also been there. He kept them company during the long winter evenings, telling them old stories of monks and pirates, completely at his ease with them. Sometimes he remained silent; one had always wanted to know why. His silences did not obliterate him as they did some other persons, who ceased to exist as soon as they did not talk; his silences made one look at him, and inevitably ask questions, the most fantastic and far-fetched questions. Surely she had loved his silences too.

Now Anghelos was dead.

How could it be possible, then, that she should not be lying behind that door, her arms flung out and her hair parted on her white nape?

* * *

He thought rapidly. There was a narrow balcony joining her room to the two rooms situated on either side of it. In the summer he often climbed out on to the balcony from one of the adjacent rooms, and stepped over to her window noiselessly to surprise her with delight. Now he climbed out on to the balcony once more, but there would be no surprise for her, because she was dead.

It was very cold on the balcony. The tall climbing jasmine that clung to the railings was brown and shrivelled. When it was in bloom, he used to pick thousands of the little white flowers and strew them over her bed, on her awakening face, on her throat, everywhere. But in winter, even the small green jasmine leaves disappeared, the thin branches were left bare. At the farthest end of the balcony lay a broken flower-pot; one of the fragments, hollower than the rest, still held a cupful of rainwater. Also, part of the gutter had been torn away from the roof by the wind, and now lay among the broken pottery; it must have happened several days ago, for it had begun to rust; at the slightest gust of wind it banged against the metal railings forlornly. Before reaching her window he looked around at a loss and saw the green swollen sea again, green and ponderous, possessor of all the power. He shivered. I must go on, he said, and at moments he

thought she had died a long time ago, it was all over and done with, and it was useless to go and look in at her window; then the next moment he felt that as long as he stayed away from her, as long as the sight in the room remained unseen, nothing would happen; she would be dead only at the precise moment he looked in at the window.

He advanced, however, because it was cold and the window was waiting; the dry twigs of the jasmine plant brushed against his jacket as he made his way towards it. His emotion was so great that there came a lapse in which he forgot what it was all about. He thought: I'll catch cold if I stay out here much longer.

Suddenly he was there, his face pressed against the window pane, and the room before him.

* * *

She was sitting in her armchair, quietly mending some old stockings, wearing spectacles. She happened to look up from her work, and saw a white haggard face staring at her from behind the window pane. In her surprise she did not notice whether it had a body or not; there was only this dreadful face that had come out of nowhere, among the terrifying loneliness of 'outside'. She thought: If he suddenly begins talking, I shall not know what he is saying, because the wind will take away his voice. And he will be mute, mute, mute, while the wind flaps around his face.

Suddenly the face seemed to press forward and flatten itself against the glass, so that the chin and nose took a fantastic, inhuman aspect; the whole face for a moment was entirely deformed; then it disappeared, before she had time either to move or to speak.

She took off her spectacles, and only then was she able to remember it had been her husband. And instantly, without a moment's doubt, she guessed what suspicion had brought him there, and what had been in his mind when he first peered into her room.

* * *

They tried to postpone the moment of meeting again, but it was bound to come sooner or later.

When she finally went down the stairs to him, her face was burning with shame, and on his part he was so uncomfortable that he could neither look at her nor look away. 'Why can't we think of something else? Something different. But where have all the different things gone?' he thought wearily. 'We can only turn round and round that single moment that changed everything, the little moment in which I peered at her from the window, ridiculously, with the fear of death on my face.' Of course, it seemed preposterous now. One did not die like that. Yet it had been so clear, so vivid. Anghelos had come and made it so plausible.

And now she was here, in the same room, with the same hair and crossed hands, like yesterday and any other day. She had not died—but would that prove she did not love Anghelos? He could not

relinquish the thought of her love for him. Standing before the closed door that day, he had wanted so passionately to understand, that he had taken the love within him, made it poignant and intimate, so that now it could not be pulled out without a great deal of determination. And the difficulty was that he had no such determination; in reality he intended to keep it still, for it had been an unforgettable experience. He could not give up this legend, these secrets, this adventure of listening to distant calls in the past. He could not take this away from her, and from himself. In his imagination he had turned her eyes towards Anghelos, and now he could not call them away; he could not dissever her from that which placed her under such a startling new light.

He did not suffer; he had not come back to himself yet; he was still within her, contemplating the man who had always seemed to be freshly back from an adventure. And so the moment, the single little moment that lay between them dragged on, and grew unhindered. From the start they had given it too much importance. But how could it have been otherwise? Out of nothing he had created a meaning; it weighed on him now like a responsibility. The meaning had followed him faithfully from her bedroom, across the corridor and down to this room, and then settled in the air above them and started a life of its own, independently of either of them. Perhaps it had been hidden in him all the time, and the moment he had looked in at the window he had set it free, irrevocably. Here it was now, among all other real things, among the armchairs and the table.

She thought: He expected me to be dead, then he looked in and found I was not dead. I was mending stockings. She was ashamed of not having been dead.

She was not in love with Anghelos. Only terrified and haunted by the frozen death, by the aching association of cold and death. One night in the living-room her husband had moved freely towards her, and kissed her, and smiled very closely. The thaw had begun then. Since that night she had thought no more of Anghelos and his death.

But the next day there had been rain and grey kitchens, something missing in the world; one of those vague depressions that come and go without explanation. She found nothing to remind her of the warm living-room, and continue it. In the dullness of her mood, she had wanted to know as little as possible of the world, until that missing thing (perhaps only the sun) returned and allowed things to move on again. At night she shut her eyes quickly, eagerly accepting sleep before she had time to discover the disappointment of the missing life all over again. And then quietude had gradually come to her: 'It will soon come back; perhaps this is the way one recovers', and she had not minded the greyness very much, as long as her hands were occupied. She had desired to be alone, away from compulsions, so she had locked herself in her room with a small selfish, perverse thrill, and had begun to mend stockings with a keen enjoyment of her privacy and the leisure of her fingers. That was when he had knocked

at the door. She had not wanted him. She had no wish to explain to him why she did not want him, because she did not know. And she hated to get up from her chair with all these things on her lap. When he had insisted at the door, a panic of indecision had taken hold of her, but it soon settled down to a stolid stubbornness. He had called and called again, but she had been well protected by her stubbornness.

And then the white mute face at the window, staring among the wind and the flapping trees.

She was left with her two hands useless on her lap, and failure, failure beating inexplicably in the room's emptiness. Something had gone wrong; a disappointment, a deception had been inflicted on someone. But she could not see what it was; she searched for it and got lost several times, because she had no indication as to which way to go; the error was diffused in every action, in every suggestion of an action. It hindered her movements like a web, blunted all her efforts.

I shall give up, she thought, and passed her hand over her brow in a gesture of erasion. Her husband was still at her side. She realized that during all this time they had not spoken a word to each other.

When he saw that she had become aware of him again, he took her arm quietly, almost sadly, and said: 'Supper is ready'. He led her to the dining-room with infinite care, as on the day she had left hospital after an operation. And she, in spite of her great boredom, unconsciously pretended she was broken, and deeply needed the solicitude he offered her.

* * *

A few days later, she was in the garden watering the shrivelled jasmine-bush; the weather was warm, meek and pale as a grey dove. A scent of faded camomile hung in the air, reminded her of sleepy autumn days of childhood in the park, when all the alleys were deserted and the ducks looked so lonely in the pond. Her mother used to send her to the park to gather camomile for her fair hair.

A playful smile passed over her face as she watched the jasmine-bush greedily, hastily drinking up the water given to it. She felt contented, at ease in the garden; she hummed a small shapeless tune. Then suddenly she heard her husband coming down the stairs towards her. Instantly she was silent; her eyelids dropped, her movements became weary as if she were doing this gardening work only to keep her mind away from a great suffering. The change was so rapid that she did not have time to realize what she was doing or why.

'Don't tire yourself, dear', said her husband anxiously.

To her horror she heard herself answering with a sigh: 'Oh, never mind'.

Why am I pretending like this? Who is forcing me to it? she thought amazed. Yet I can't help it, I can't help it at all.

Then even when he had gone away, she forgot to shed the pretence

and still kept her eyes wearily lowered and her mouth quivering as if with restrained tears.

* * *

She gradually became a pale and silent woman; she found a secret pleasure in clothing herself in this new attitude; it grew more familiar every day. The hours were empty no longer; she found nourishment in this pale romantic pain lent to her by mistake. In a moment of lucidity she thought: This is my answer, the answer he expected from me: I am answering the mute question of his face staring at my window. The other answer, the negative one (a woman calmly mending stockings) was too humilating—too disproportionate.

That night a certain gesture of his brought such unexpected consequences that for the first time she felt a vague fear stirring in her, a premonition that the whole thing was slipping out of her control and that she was being carried away, helpless, in a dark, unknown direction.

She had been staring at her plate absent-mindedly, when he suddenly leaned over and placed his hand gently over hers. 'Darling', he had said, and there had been such tenderness and apprehension in his face that her throat had tightened and ached, and tears had risen to her eyes. She left the table and ran up to her room, her face streaming with those tears she could not understand.

It was some time before she calmed down, and then she stared at the wall incredulously, thinking: what is happening to me? where is all this leading us?

She remembered with a start that Anghelos was the cause of everything. She had almost forgotten him; now she turned back to him questioningly—he stood before her, as if he had been there always, embellished by the solitude of her room and the softness left over by her recent tears. This is the man who has made life different and strange, she thought wonderingly. He was in the house, he was powerful and silent and everywhere. It was Anghelos, the same Anghelos who had been a wonderful, constant companion, who had been young and capricious, tall and laughing, who had dived in the green summer waters and ridden horses without saddles. She joined her hands on her breast in a burst of fervour, then, remembering that he was dead, she broke into wild, protesting tears and thought she heard her voice, muffled by the pillow, cry out his name once.

* * *

When she woke up in the morning the presence of Anghelos was still with her, like the warmth of someone who had slept in her arms all night long. She opened the window to let in the daylight, then went back to bed in the hope of recapturing the warm feeling, and the thrill of Anghelos's arrival. She listened, very still. What kind of joy was this, then, to lie in calm daylight with naked arms and closed eyes, listening to memories that had not been tasted before?

There was much to remember; Anghelos was clothed in memories, she had only to touch him and they came to life, like windows at night. Fool not to have looked at him before! But no matter; it was better, rarer, more generous to have been given his memories all at once, to have been hurled against him in this magnificent manner. It was thus: she came upon a hill and looked over the other side, and saw a valley so beautiful that her breath was torn from her throat. She broke free and went to it ardently; in the haste of surrender her long hair streamed behind her like loose silk, and she knew she had become incredibly beautiful. Startling notes sprang from the general confusion of the valley where Anghelos stood—he sent her a cry, a syllable, a movement only, which were immediately accepted and made triumphant. Then in her bewilderment she let them go, and blind and clumsy she plunged headlong again in the widening gulf. I love you, I love you, she sang in bliss, thrilling like a harp. She was strong and light, full of glory.

When she opened her eyes they were cool and softly drenched, as if they had shed a great profusion of light.

Down the hill-slope Anghelos came at dusk, whistling unlocated among the trees.

Time passed and her amazement grew, for she was discovering a legend for her life, like her husband a few days ago, only more rapturously because she was a woman. It is unique, she thought happily, frightened by the preciousness of her new possession. It must not be spoilt, lost among the things we leave behind. She was in a mystic mood; she was a guardian, a sentinel in the cathedral watching over the body. She gathered her long naked arms and folded them tightly on her breast.

* * *

Later in the morning her husband came to her room, driven by anxiety. She never sleeps late, he thought, not knowing that she had been transfigured since last night.

He drew close to her bed. 'Are you all right?' She turned her face to the wall. Her suffering, he thought, her suffering. 'Dearest, you must not let yourself go like this', he said. He sat down on the edge of the bed, carefully. 'You should get up and go for a walk in the garden, but to the trees beyond the garden.

But she had been waiting for something else, not this careful voice, for a whistle to rouse her from her bed and lead her away, not to the garden, but to the trees beyond the garden.

She looked at him gravely, thinking: I cannot listen to him. There is no place.

He grew firm, like a nurse; he did not understand. He leaned towards her, trying to persuade her with his eyes. A silent insistent fight began between them; no attack, no hatred yet, only this muffled 'against'.

He was the first to break down under it. 'Don't you understand I

can't just look on to see you making yourself ill?' He was tormented, pitiful; a thought flashed across her mind: 'All these days I've been wanting him to pity me, I sought it and accepted it; but now I cannot pity him in turn—I have nothing to give him. I can't. It's awful.' It was not awful. She did not feel it.

As if he guessed she was thinking of his pity for her, his eyes instantly softened and his hand on her hand became loving, gentle.

'Poor love. You cried yesterday, didn't you?'

His hand travelled over her cheek: 'So pale, so pale, poor love'.

When she had burst into tears at supper yesterday, he had worn the same expression as now; but she did not recognize it. She had gone off on her own now. There was no reason for compassion. Yet he insisted on bringing it back to her, the sorrow and the tears; he came closer as if to force her, trying to evoke yesterday's emotion, the paleness and the protection; he sought it like a joy. It was morbid.

'Poor love—you must not cry'.

But she did not feel like crying; she had found her joy. And while he sat there spending himself upon her, she distantly thought: I do not think I need him any more. He prepared it all for me, now I am ready to take it into my own hands; there is no need for him. She watched him dispassionately: Yes, it is so, you needn't remind me of Anghelos any more. For his eyes told her he was still thinking of Anghelos, not in the same way as she, but with an ideal sadness, and a fascination because of the beauty it gave her and the sweet poignancy it brought to their relationship. He, too, was under the spell; for him, too, life had changed and become eventful and strange. And he had come to her this morning because the secret had been finally revealed to them both since last night; there was no more shame and discomfort; it had risen to the surface and they had both acknowledged it; he had come to share this secret. She felt joined to him against her will, standing by his side in a hateful communion. When he touched her hand and looked at her silently, it gave her the sensation of being dragged into a furtive conspiracy.

She did not want to share Anghelos with him. She did not want him to know anything about it. Yet she could not help thinking of the moment at the window when he had sown the first seed. It was he who had communicated the startling idea to her. He was irrevocably involved in the secret, she could not get rid of him.

Meanwhile she so passionately wanted to be alone with Anghelos. She was the guardian of a beautiful, sleeping head weighing on her lap; but her husband sat silent and modest by her side, stupidly claiming a place in the pattern. Suddenly she quivered with irritation against him; she must push him away with both hands: you do not belong here.

But he came nearer and she imperceptibly withdrew, until she felt screwed up in a tight hard ball, flattened against the wall, bristling with impatience and distaste. How cruel people become when their feelings are turned in another direction, she thought. I think I could

watch him suffer, cry out to me, right here, yet remain untouched, yet feel nothing but a little more impatience. She saw him leaning towards her beseechingly, offering himself; she saw him straining, offering—and unwanted, and she flinched under his humiliation. It was terrible that he should be so utterly unwanted, like a man selling cheap things in an elegant café. She threw back her head with a gasp, longing to break free with a strong shake of her shoulders. In a moment I am going to hate him, she thought. Can't he understand and go away before it is too late?

But he was solidly rooted at her side, waiting. The hatred became urgent; she jumped out of bed in panic. I'm going to the bathroom, she said hastily, and slipped out of the room. Only let him not begin knocking at doors again. . . .

* * *

She breathed deeply; she was alone. She did not turn back to Anghelos at once; she was still frightened by that flicker of hate for her husband, in the bedroom. A moment later, it would have leapt out of her control, independent and blind. She was much shaken: How am I going to live with him? The question was without answer; she only repeated it to prove how insoluble it was. 'That he and I should stand face to face between these walls, these narrow walls—' They would both grow poisoned, slowly, and crawl to an ugly, poisoned conclusion, which she could only vaguely sense, like an evil smell.

She kept away from him as much as possible; sometimes she crossed him on the stairs and passed him like a stranger, not even smiling. Yet it was easy to smile. 'It's strange how sincere one becomes when one is in love.' She was aggressively sincere. At moments she wanted to shout it out to him, her love and her pride. But it seemed that he did not want the truth any more; he was afraid; he wanted to postpone, to hide the important words. He went about the house careful and hesitating, taking refuge in small commonplace phrases about lunch and supper, the garden and the leaking roof and the pregnant cat. Was it cowardice or only the need to come back to reality now?

The day dragged on without interest, like a duty. In the house they went from room to room, listening to their footsteps behind the separation of walls, unconnected yet intensely aware of each other. She could not settle down; she found nothing to do in the house, because there was no permanence. At the back of her mind the thoughts of love were waiting, the world of Anghelos was waiting for her like a garden. But the heavy house kept her back, tangled in a difficult net; meanwhile Anghelos waited, and since that morning she had not been able to look at him again. 'The next time I look he might have disappeared, if this goes on much longer,' and she clenched her hands in panic. I should go away, she said.

Later on, the thought came to her again, the yearning and uncer-

tainty clearing away like hot vapours, to leave only a cool hard intention.

In her room that day she opened a drawer to get a handkerchief, and saw that it was untidy; she prepared to clear it up, indeed, to clear up all her drawers, happy to have found something to do. But suddenly she held back her hands and thought: no, it's not worth while, I'm going to pack most of these things. The thought did not surprise her in the least.

She made no plans. While he was having lunch in the empty dining-room, she went up to him quickly and without preparing words told him: 'I think I'll go to the house in town for a day or two. It's been closed so long, the attic must be full of mice, and the trunks full of moth. It needs airing'. He did not look up, but stopped chewing.

'I'll be back in two or three days', she said.

'Of course', he answered.

She suddenly felt quite friendly, and said briskly: 'I'll tell the cook to bring you some fresh fruit, they've just brought in a basket'.

He watched her go out, thinking: 'It's nothing, after all. She has to go and air the house. The attics are full of mice.'

He felt sober now, for he knew that in spite of her departure the legend was beginning to expire. He sat very still, as if he had just had an operation and wasn't allowed to move. He felt he could stay like this for hours.

* * *

She left that evening, without looking back at the house. Once she had loved it very much. He took her to the gate and watched her go away; he said nothing to keep her back. The winter numbness had got him again, and his hands hung limply at his side, empty.

Then a couple of days later he went away too, on business, unable to bear the loneliness any longer. He abandoned the house to its closed windows and battered trees, and the gutter banging still on the balcony. It gave him a pang of remorse. He looked back at it, and then came a sudden, secure optimism. 'We'll be back again in the summer, anyhow, and then we'll have all the gutters fixed.'

FOLLY FIELDS

As my daughter and I walked down the path
—She herself like a bright-polled bird in her velvet cap—
The birds scatter before us like a loath
Remnant of autumn leaves in this winter gust:
Green, gold, scarlet and brown, primrose and rust
They flicker like light.

And I know that when we have turned into the road
The birds will all return to their private living,
The thrush throw melodious defiance from the oak,
The bullfinch sway on the sorrel stalks, the robin
Defend his berried territory, tit and goldfinch
Regain their world again.

So when we return to what we call home
I shall feel, willy nilly, that we disturb
Creatures as persistent as ghosts in an old mansion.
We are but migratory tenants here.
After our dispersal, our turning to earth,
These fields will house birds.

ROSEMARY ROBERTS

SELECTED NOTICES

Existence and Being, by Martin Heidegger. (Vision Press, 15s.).

South-westwards of Freiburg in the heart of the Black Forest lies the little town of Todtnauberg. As one follows the path up the steep valley one meets on every hand signs of the Suabian tradition, the way-side crucifixes, the newly-consecrated chapel of ease on the far hill, and, on the slopes, peasants tending their land as they have done for centuries. Cutting into the hill-side is the black line of the forest; the nearer one approaches the forest the more scattered the habitations, until one comes to the last hut, a plain construction barely furnished, in which Martin Heidegger lives. From this corner of the valley, where the silence almost makes itself heard, his thoughts have been sent resounding through the world to capture the imaginations of the most varied types of men. At one time Heidegger provided the Spanish Falange with their philosophy of life, at another time a Japanese hoped to use his thought as the basis of Japanese nationalism; in France he is favoured by atheistic existentialists, and in Germany young Catholic theologians have begun to speak his language.

That thinkers from the English-speaking world should make the acquaintance of this powerful personality was obviously desirable, and therefore one welcomes whole-heartedly the publication of *Existence and Being,* which includes four essays by Heidegger himself, as well as a very necessary and long introduction by Werner Brock. In his introduction (230 pages) Dr. Brock skilfully leads the reader through the forest of new terms coined by Heidegger in *Sein und Zeit,* often making remarkably illuminating observations of his own (pp. 125-6), at one place flagging into banality through the intensity of his effort (p. 241, ll. 15-17) and at one point being badly served by the printers (p. 231). Of the essays themselves two can be described as meditations with and upon Hölderlin whilst the other two deal with the essence of truth and metaphysics.[1] The translators have successfully carried out a task which would have seemed well-nigh impossible in view of Heidegger's startling linguistic idiosyncracies.

Few people have ever denied the title of 'stimulating' to Heidegger's thought, even when they have only been stimulated to anger and have agreed with the positivists, that it is 'non-sense'. How fertile and suggestive this new volume has proved may be gathered from the calculation that the present reviewer's notes upon it would extend to several hundred pages if they were all adequately developed. Heidegger's remarks, for example, suggest limits to the validity of Aristotelian 'logic' and its continuation(?) in modern 'logistics' which are worth expanding by some logician who finds himself in the no-man's land between Carnap Limited on one side and guaranteed scholasticism on the other. Aristotle's logic deals with beings that are 'zuhanden', for use, and is therefore a logic of practical, every-day, decisions; there may be a quite different 'logic' found in 'Dasein', in 'existentialia'. In a very different sphere, that of poetry, Heidegger treats the poet not as 'creative' or 'original' in the modern, shallow sense of the world, but as one who 'names what is holy', as a kind of seer; an interpretation of the poet's vocation which has enabled the Tübingen Platonist, Krüger, to show why Plato attached so much importance to poetry—because it was a sacred calling.[2] These are but two out of the many examples one could quote of how Heidegger's thought opens up fresh horizons in the most varied directions.

Furthermore it needs to be stressed, in view of current misunderstandings,

[1]Another work by Heidegger, *Holzwege* (Verlag Klostermann, Frankfurt) has recently appeared, and should now be added to the list of his writings at the beginning of *Existence and Being.*

[2]Cf. Krüger's *Einsicht und Leidenschaft.*

that Heidegger is a 'strict' thinker. This does not mean that he is 'exact' in the sense usual to the natural sciences, for he himself often denies it; but his constant thesis is that there is a rigour and strictness proper to metaphysics which cannot in the least be reduced to the exactitude of natural science. If his complicated expressions are taken to belie his claims the intrinsic arduousness of his subject should lend support to them; many of his critics fail to see difficulties in difficult subjects. No better proof of his philosophical rigour could be found than his early studies on that subtle author, Duns Scotus, which form a brilliant preface to the whole question of unity and its various meanings. In fact, though Dr. Brock makes no use of this early work of Heidegger's in his introduction, it is in many respects the most convenient way of approaching his thought. Scotus, also, insists that *entia non sunt diminuenda,* that an extended and minute analysis of phenomena is the essential prerequisite for philosophical enquiry before a constitutive causal analysis can be engaged upon. And even Scotus's weaknesses are reflected in this modern interpreter: just as Scotus searches for the 'horsiness' of the 'horse', likewise Heidegger investigates 'the essential element of the essence' and even talks of the 'dis-essence'. How far these expressions result from confusing levels of language and levels of reality could only be decided after a long exposition, but it is worth noting that the intense striving after a vocabulary as rich, individual, and many-sided as existence itself is characteristic of Scotism. English readers will be aware, for instance, of how our most notable Scotist, Gerard Manley Hopkins, is constantly trying to spring open the limitations of language, as though he were impatient because speech is not identical with existence. Heidegger's writings betray the same impatience, the same desire to catch existence in its sheer individuality, until he dares to say, 'the thinker utters Being'.

Even rapid observations such as these are sufficient to bring out the special obstacles, and dangers, which confront Heidegger's interpreters. The obstacles arise from having to acquire the thinker's own language before being able to share his vision of the world; the danger, from having to make what cannot be described as anything less than an act of faith in Heidegger. If it seems exaggerated to speak here of an 'act of faith' one might call attention to what has been said by Heidegger's French interpreter, de Waehlens, who uses the phrase 'risquer le saut' to describe how one has to make a leap to get into his thought. Nor is the practice of laying such demands upon the reader an unfashionable one these days; writers as diverse as Whitehead, Husserl and James Joyce, all demand a life-time's study before they can be understood—and even then they are liable to say with Husserl, 'Nur Einer hat mir verstanden, und er hat missverstanden'. Everyone will decide for himself whether to regard these demands as reasonable or preposterous, but they had better be forewarned that nothing less is required of them if they are to become Heideggerians. The rest of this present review-notice needs to be read, therefore, with an eye to the fact that its author is far from being a Heideggerian, does not speak the language, and is simply trying to help newcomers to Heidegger to bring his philosophy into focus.

As a pupil of Husserl, Heidegger is an exponent of the phenomenological method—one says, almost automatically, 'the phenomenological method in philosophy'—but here a knotty problem confronts one immediately. For the most able exponent of this method says that it 'is not opposed to metaphysics any more than it is to logic . . . it is merely non-metaphysical (pre-metaphysical, or pre-logical)'. In which case, of course, phenomenology can scarcely be a method in philosophy, as opposed to, say, physics; indeed, its protoganists claim that it is not a method restricted to one particular discipline, but is universal; nevertheless, a method has to be a method of doing *something.* And it would not be unjust to say that it is universal because it is unspecialized, because it is primitive, because it simply demands that one should look at phenomena and make sure that they are phenomena. In other words, phenomenologists have in common no more than an attitude; they are opposed to philosophies which 'take something for granted'. And it is this

very attitude of taking nothing for granted, of trying to work out an entirely 'presuppositionless' philosophy which marks Heidegger as the typical modern man, a direct descendant of Descartes. For a world-view without presuppositions is the world-view enjoyed, not by any creature, but by the Creator. Modern man has decided that he is not a creature, that he requires no presuppositions; his attitude of taking nothing for granted attempts to reverse the course of events which flowed from the 'fiat mihi secundum Verbum Tuum' of a Woman who took much for granted, whose whole life was an assertion of creaturehood, who served as the hand-maid of the Lord.

In order to test the ascription of this attitude to Heidegger let the reader carefully consider how Heidegger tries to base his renewal of metaphysics upon the experience of 'Nothing', and then compare it with the traditional foundation of metaphysics upon joyous wonder at the very fact of Being. It would clearly be misguided to refute Heidegger by a display of semantic dexterity, even if one suspects that the problem he presents arises from his own semantic gambols. It is true that the force of his paradoxes about 'Nothing' derive from the way in which he uses the word in a manner peculiar to himself whilst at the same time implying the connotation inevitable in the tradition of the German language—which even he has no choice about using if he is to communicate with Germans. It is also true that Heidegger, like Scotus before him, often uses parts of speech as though any part of speech might be taken to signify a 'substance'. Nevertheless Heidegger's case for his new metaphysics, for the revelation of Being by way of 'Nothing', does not rest entirely upon linguistic trickery but upon an experience of 'Nothing'; he feels the effects of 'Nothing', and therefore says that 'The Nothing nihilates of itself'. Some of his readers would object that although they themselves have a similar experience it should be termed 'frustration' or 'disgust' or 'nausea', and that the negative quality in each of these experiences only becomes intelligible because of a previous positive experience of Being. Just as sin is no more than the shadow cast by the light of God when that light is intercepted by some obstruction of the impure will, likewise the experience of 'Nothing' is the shadow cast by the light of Being when man tries to deny his creativeness and so shuts himself off from the source of all Being. What Heidegger takes as primary, is, in fact, secondary; to try to base metaphysics upon it is not to build even upon shifting sand, for he is using the 'shifting' and not the sand.

But the implications of his attitude cannot be confined to metaphysical circles, for they are simply one manifestation, the most recent and clear, of a disease which has been slowly eating up modern man. No matter where one seeks for its beginnings, whether in Luther or Descartes, its essence cannot be mistaken: it is the denial of the primacy of Being and the refusal to accept Being joyously as good. Some would prefer to say that it originated as the substitution of thought for Being, which substitution is the unmistakeable mark of the neurotic; they would then go on to describe modern man for the neurotic that he is. Others might think it a mark of bourgeois civilization and point to the boredom, dread, and irrationalism of a Kierkegaard as its symptom.[3] By this time, however, the question of origins has become slightly academic, a concern of the historian of ideas. It is much more urgent to insist that Heidegger belongs to this tradition, summing it up most powerfully in his own person and writings. Not by accident does he take Hölderlin as the poet of the poet, and speaks of his being 'received into the protection of the night of lunacy'. Amongst his own inspirers was the same Kierkegaard, the philosopher of the absurd, who was driven to the verge of insanity. He is, moreover, a child of Nietzsche whose ultimate madness was the logical conclusion of having proclaimed the death of God, of the creature denying the Creator. We who, like Heidegger, have inherited this tradition, now have the choice of either accepting or rejecting it. Amongst the younger generation, brought up amidst the alarms of war and the ruin of cities, many are eager

[3]Cf. Künzli's valuable study, *Die Angst als abendländische Krankheit.*

to accept what looks like a heroic philosophy of endurance and to drink the cup to its dregs. They should be warned that this way of 'Nothing' is the way to madness—quite literally, to madness; let them heed the fate of those who have followed it.

There are some who will condemn the above judgement upon a philosophy which is acclaimed as the outstanding contribution to twentieth century thought. Indeed there are some Catholic theologians who interpret the 'Nothing' of Heidegger as a fumbling rediscovery of St. John of the Cross's 'Nada'; they find an atmosphere of religion and sacredness about Heidegger's thought; they point to his brilliant postscript to *Was ist Metaphysik,* where he says, 'in sacrifice there is expressed that hidden *thanking* which alone does homage to the grace wherewith Being has endowed the nature of man'. Captivated by the verbal similarity between these expressions and their own dogmatic formulations they are ready to 'baptize' Heidegger, to regard his thought as unconsciously Catholic just as they 'catholicize' Kierkegaard or Baudelaine or Rilke. But the fact that a philosophy does not uphold materialism does not make it Christian. The Devil is no materialist; he is pure spirit. And one can make sacrifices to false gods; the Nazis were not materialists. To one observer, at least, this new philosophy breathes an atmosphere of the pagan world before the Incarnation; the clue to its spirit is discovered in Heidegger's return to the vision of Heraclitus, for his cosmogony is that of Homer and Hesiod wherein the demonic forces had not yet been brought into subjection. Obviously one hesitates to accept the dictum of Edith Stein, also a pupil of Husserl's who became a Carmelite and ended her life in a concentration camp, a victim of this diabolical neo-paganism. She said: 'Heidegger's philosophy is the philosophy of a bad conscience'; and the dictum does offer the most striking and coherent interpretation, not only of Heidegger's thought, but of the whole modern epoch.[4] Modern European man is a lapsed Catholic whose desperate efforts to get behind the Incarnation are doomed to failure because he can never forget the offer that was made to him then. Not by blinding himself to the fact will he regain his sanity but by joyously and graciously welcoming it.

Selected Poems. By Ezra Pound. (Faber, 12s. 6d.).
The Pisan Cantos. By Ezra Pound. (Faber, 12s. 6d.).

At a time when the trend in modern verse is again, on the whole, towards Romantic subjectivity and what D. S. Savage calls 'the Personal Principle', it is salutary—and refreshing—to turn to a body of poetry as objective in tone, as exact in its imagery, and as meticulous in its care and attention to form as the *Selected Poems* of Ezra Pound—re-issued after twenty years with T. S. Eliot's renewed blessing. When one considers this volume and the recently published *Collected Poetry* of Richard Aldington one realizes that if Imagism is dead it is an unconscionable time lying down.

Ezra Pound was, of course, even in his pre-Canto days, something much more than an Imagist poet. But as the leader of that group after F. S. Flint, he never forgot its tenets nor the doctrines of Rémy de Gourmont which he imbibed through T. E. Hulme. Hulme stressed that the hard, definite, precise word was essential; that poetry 'always endeavours to arrest you and to make you continuously see a physical thing, to prevent you gliding through an abstract process' into Romantic evocation. The exact delineation, in concrete imagery, of the thing seen, heard or felt; the avoidance of woolly abstraction and emotive gush; and the use of *vers libre*—'free' only in the sense of being irregular but, in fact, controlled and manipulated to very precise ends: these characteristics of Imagism, and its acceptance of any

[4]We are well aware that Heidegger explicitly repudiated such an interpretation of his philosophy in 'Über den Humanismus' (*Platons Lehre von der Wahrheit,* p. 71: Verlag A. Francke, Bern). This does not deter us from suggesting it.

subject matter, exalted or banal, have always distinguished Pound's verse from *Personae* (1909) to *The Pisan Cantos* (1949).

It was Pound's development from that basis between *Mœurs Contemporains* (1915) and *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* (1920) that combined with the influence of Owen and Hopkins to lay the foundation of what is often so loosely called 'modern poetry', and that profoundly affected the early work of T. S. Eliot. It is Eliot's fusion of his eclectic material, the transmutation of whatever he borrows, the cohesion of the finished product, that make him Pound's superior both as poet and thinker, and that give him that integrated, contemporary view on which two generations of poets have built. But his unique position in the poetry world to-day should not blind us—as it has, perhaps, blinded too many—to the really important and influential achievements of Ezra Pound.

Eliot himself, having dedicated *The Waste Land* to Pound as *il miglior fabbro,* renders him high praise in his (deliberately unrevised) Introduction to this selection. He pays tribute to Pound's genuine originality, his verse being 'the logical development of the verse of his English predecessors'; and he defends him against the two opposite charges most frequently levelled at him of being 'objectionably modern' or 'objectionably archaic'. He sees the progress in Pound's work as 'a steady effort towards the synthetic construction of a style of speech. In each of the elements there is something of Pound and something of some other'. This is important, for one sign of Pound's real stature is in the fading of those other voices and the development of his own. Eliot, perhaps by reason of his greater powers of fusion, and because his eclecticism is from fields more alike, finds need to discard less than Pound in his progress. But Pound ranges widely; his diversity is greater; and it is correspondingly more difficult to see in retrospect the poet of *Personæ* in the poet of *The Cantos.* But this selection from all his verse before *The Cantos* (except the *Homage to Sextus Propertius*) should help to adjust the perspective and avoid the charge of dichotomy in his work—a charge levelled, equally, of course, at Yeats, Eliot, and Edith Sitwell.

It is strange at first to encounter his revivification of the Provençal and mediæval Italian poetry cheek by jowl with renderings from Classical Latin, imitations of the Greek Anthology, and translations from the Chinese; but a reference to his essays and to *How to Read* throws some light on this. Of the inadequacy, the esoteric eclecticism and the obvious prejudices of that work F. R. Leavis has already written more than adequately in *Education and the University.* These things are not our concern. What it does make clear is the choice of subject matter and inspiration of the various sections of these *Selected Poems.* They take their rise from those whom Pound considers the great, original thinkers-into-language and creators of genuinely new literary forms. As far as the light is in him, Pound goes to the countries and the periods where he thinks to find these 'makers' and their forms—whether among the Troubadours of Provence, the poets of mediæval Italy (especially Guido Cavalcanti), of ancient Greece, or of China; whether the form be the precise verbal economy of the Japanese *tanka* and *hokku* or the Anglo-Saxon four-stress alliterative line. But he does not go to these periods or metrical forms as a dilettante, 'collecting old coins or forging new ones' (to adapt Eliot's phrase). He lives in, and in turn revivifies, the old forms in his verse. 'He has grasped,' says Eliot, 'certain things in Provence and Italy which are permanent in human nature. . . . If one can really penetrate the life of another age one is penetrating the life of one's own'; a paradox that Eliot illustrates in his own work by his understanding of two such widely separated epochs as the age of Dante and the early seventeenth century.

But unconscious influences or deliberately sought inspiration become increasingly subservient, as has been said, to Pound's own voice. If his Provence is not only Bertrand de Born but also Browning, Yeats, Dowson and Symons, *Ripostes* (1912) shows Pound in closer touch with his sources and clearer of intermediaries; and *Cathay* (1915) is neither Legge nor anyone

else but Pound, as Eliot says, as 'the inventor of Chinese poetry for his time'. From *Ripostes* onwards Pound becomes himself influential. Eliot draws attention to 'some of the lovely small poems' in that volume: the delicacy of 'A Virginal' is one, perhaps; 'Δωρια' is another; and already 'Erat Hora' had been published:

> 'Thank you, whatever comes.' And then she turns
> And, as the ray of sun on hanging flowers
> Fades when the wind hath lifted them aside,
> Went swiftly from me. Nay, whatever comes
> One hour was sunlit and the most high gods
> May not make boast of any better thing
> Than to have watched that hour as it passed.

Was it not of such a moment that Eliot was thinking when he later wrote *'La figlia che piange'*? And in *Ripostes*, too, is that most notable rendering from the Anglo-Saxon of 'The Seafarer' (which Auden remembered with profit when he wrote 'Doom is dark and deeper than any sea dingle'); and perhaps also from the Anglo-Saxon—part of the lamentation in *The Wanderer*—comes one of the finest of Pound's early poems, delicate in cadence, skilled in metrical control, 'The Return',

> See, they return; ah, see the tentative
> Movements, and the slow feet, . . .

This development continues in the *Lustra* section, and with it a new note —sometimes ironic, sometimes satiric, sometimes merely truculent and increasingly belligerent: the first and second 'Salutation', 'Commission', 'Salvationists'—

> Come, my songs, let us speak of perfection—
> We shall get ourselves rather disliked.

And here, too, comes the bulk of his epigrams—verse which does not claim to be great poetry but which is widely varied in its range: witty, urbane, and often suffused with pathos when he uses the epigram in the old, Greek elegiac sense; ranging from 'Epitaph' for Leucis

> . . . who intended a Grand Passion,
> Ends with a willingness-to-oblige,

'Meditation' or 'The Bath Tub' to the moving lines to 'Ione, Dead the Long Year', or 'Liu Ch'e'.

Comment has been already made on the *Cathay* section as Twentieth-Century Chinese translation. Two things in it are exquisite in the precision of their words and images: 'Exile's Letter' and, more particularly, 'The River Merchant's Wife'.

Thereafter, Pound tends more and more towards a modern idiom and individual expression. He is not everywhere equally successful. In *Mœurs Contemporains* there is a surface glitter but the characterization tends towards cartoon rather than to flesh and blood reality, and Eliot is surely right in finding Bertrand de Born more 'modern' than the hero of that poem. But in *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*, Pound, contemporary and original, breaks free. There is a dry casualness, a lowering of the tone, and at the same time a sweeping indictment of contemporary shallowness and loss of values, that point forward to *The Waste Land*. It is perhaps unfortunate for Pound that it is with that poem that this section must be compared. It is Pound's literary autobiography—and opens with an *'Ode pour l'election de son sepulchre'*. Feeling himself 'Out of tune with his time' he modestly renounces his efforts 'to maintain "the sublime" in the old sense'. The first three parts of the Ode crystallize around the 'Heraclitan' stanza:

> All things are a flowing,
> Sage Heraclitus says;
> But a tawdry cheapness
> Shall outlast our days,

and are followed by the section showing close kinship with the war disillusion and tragic pity of Wilfred Owen.

The title poem, 'Mauberley', takes up—sometimes in identical phrases—the theme of the group to deepen and amplify it. There is a brilliant to-fro movement between images of contemporary feverishness and disintegration, and the order and reason of the Classical world; and just here is its historical value in the whole corpus of Pound's work. It is the key to methods he was to develop to the last degree in *The Cantos*.

Before an examination of *The Pisan Cantos* themselves some comments on *The Cantos* as a whole may not be amiss. Pound obviously attaches enormous importance to them, and Eliot has confessed that they are 'the only "poem of some length" by any of my contemporaries that I can read with enjoyment and admiration'. The first of them was written three years before *Mauberley* —that poem in which he wrote the epitaph on his earlier work. Now he gathers his experience in a kind of testament. It is his first attempt to build up—out of fragments (cf. *The Waste Land*)—a long poem. Not all will share unqualifiedly in Eliot's high praise of them. They lack organic, inner unity; and Pound fails to impose a coherent intelligible form from without. He seems to have no touchstones of value, and one Canto seldom illuminates, or intelligibly relates to, another. It has been suggested that he aims at interlocking the 'ideograms' of his mind; but, in fact, even for the attentive reader, they seldom *do* interlock. He has his own defence: his claim of a coherent framework and an over-all design. Yeats in *A Packet for Ezra Pound* tells how Pound explained to him that '. . . it will, when the hundredth canto is finished, display a structure like that of a Bach fugue. There will be no plot, no chronicle of events, no logic of discourse, but two themes, the Descent into Hades from Homer, a Metamorphosis from Ovid, and, mixed with these, mediæval or modern historical characters . . . a poem in which there is nothing that can be taken out and reasoned over, nothing that is not part of the poem itself.'

That explains much; but not all. It explains Pound's use of words as though they were musical phrases—a deliberate Symbolist confusion of the technique of the two arts in the manner of Mallarmé . . . or Gertrude Stein; a confusion which many will feel, however, to militate strongly against the *poetic* unity of the whole. There are individual beauties—the superb translations from Homer in Canto I; the lovely song opening of Canto XXX, this fine reworking of Cavalcanti's *Donna mi prega* in Canto XXXV, XXXVI or, among *The Pisan Cantos*, the magnificent ending of Canto LXXXI:

> The ant's a centaur in his dragon world.
> Pull down thy vanity, it is not man
> Made courage, or made order, or made grace,
> Pull down thy vanity, I say pull down.
> Learn of the green world what can be thy place
> In scaled invention or true artistry,
> Pull down thy vanity,
> Paquin pull down!

But signs of the Eliotesque fusion are significantly missing.

When we turn to this new book, Cantos LXXIV - LXXXIV (Cantos LXXXII and LXXXIII are missing) our perception of the final design is not increased. They are remarkable in their erudition, in their 'easy commerce of the old and the new'—Chinese script, Italian, French, Greek and Latin (and one, Canto LXXV, is not words but a musical score): all adduced to mirror the contemporary scene. There are flashes of humour and satire, of pathos and high seriousness, but the picture or the musical form is too shadowy, fragmentary, and elusive to grasp. To his publishers' claim: 'To those who have read the previous *Cantos* this sequence will present little difficulty' one must demur—or, at any rate, substitute 'apprehend' for 'read': for no merely intellectual understanding is possible. And, in any case,

how many have really apprehended, not the individual poems, but their alleged unity and design?

Of the reviews printed so far of these Cantos none seems to have revealed a new or significant grasp of them or their ultimate pattern; few have dared confess their inability to understand them: there is a rise in the Pound. But we shall not do a very considerable poet a service by calling a collection of impressive fragments, of memorable isolated lines, of encyclopædic knowledge of language and a flair for delicate association and allusion, a great work of *poetic art*. No final verdict is possible till the hundredth Canto appears; and full credit must be given for the extraordinary difficulty with which, under American detention, these poems were written. But that should not make a reviewer shirk his present responsibility: to pass a considered verdict on the actual Cantos before him. And this reviewer feels compelled to take his stand with Alice Steiner Amdur who did a thesis at Harvard on Pound, that in the *Cantos*, 'He has run off into the night after a will-o'-the-wisp'. And furthermore, in their esoteric erudition, their private imagery, their use of poetry to emphasize some cherished (extra-poetic) beliefs on, e.g., contemporary economic and currency problems, they represent tendencies in modern poetry to be deplored.

In the *Selected Poems* we have an important poet performing a valid and memorable service to letters in revivifying and translating from a variety of ancient and mediæval tongues, and culminating in *Mauberley* in an indictment of the waste land of contemporary society—particularly American society. The volume shows deep originality, a genuine concern with the essentials of poetry, and a wide learning that never engrosses the poetry it pervades. It is a volume that leaves one nothing to deplore. On the other hand, *The Pisan Cantos* are themselves the fruit of what one can but hope will prove to be only an interlude—albeit an interlude of great humiliation and suffering—in Pound's life. But pathos of situation is not pathos of poetry. They aim, with those already published and those still to come, at achieving what may be paradoxically called the incomprehensible universality of *Finnegan's Wake*. But that work has an indefinable but clearly apprehensible unity; that of *The Cantos*, with only eighteen to come, seems as far off as ever.

The Yellow Book. Compiled by Norman Denny. (The Bodley Head, 15s.).
Five Novels. By Ronald Firbank (Duckworth, 18s.).

Dominoes clatter upon the marble table-tops, whilst goddesses beckon from the ceiling. In the gilded room beneath, society has rallied in force; they are discussing *The Yellow Book*. In one corner there is nothing but abuse for it, in another the seasoned admiration of apricots in March. Some remain unconcerned, continuing to drink to Her Majesty and the Hangman at Pentonville; others, following in the wake of *The Westminster Gazette*, toast that an Act of Parliament should be passed making the publication of this kind of thing illegal. Away in Oxford, a young man who has contributed a defence of cosmetics to the first number delights: '. . . so far as anyone in literature can be lynched, I was'. For the passing moment, Mr. Beerbohm has become the talk of the Café Royal. The goddesses beckon him to their company.

Twenty years later it is 1915. Ronald Firbank is lunching with his publisher, Grant Richards, when C. W. R. Nevinson in uniform joins them. Firbank falls into a silence from which no persuasion can rouse him; he is not interested in the course of the war; he fears the conquest of the Germans less than that of the bourgeoisie. Around this unconventional trio, the hum of general conversation rises and falls: they remain unconcerned, whilst from other tables come endless toasts to King and country—all punctuated with the phrases, 'Vive La France' and 'England expects. . . .' Yet the goddesses remain unperturbed. They beckon to Firbank and somewhere between Piccadilly and Parnassus, he falters.

Another twenty years elapse and a new generation has come into its own. Like *Punch*, the Café Royal is proverbially not quite what it was before: no longer can the society which frequents it be so sharply divided into elements of French lubricity and English rowdyism. Everything is singularly mundane and middle-class. Except for an odd poet with ear-rings, the eccentric dynasty is at an end; except for a few galloping majors, the defence of aristocracy has been exchanged for the defence of republicanism. All eyes are focused on Spain, on 'the red advance of life'; and as one by one hopes of a millenium are shattered, 'the sunlight on the garden/ Hardens and grows cold'. 'We are dying, Egypt, dying.' The swan-song of a decade is sung: social realism has had its day, and a second, and more devastating, World War begins. In vain do the goddesses beckon.

In the literature of the period the three phases merge. For *The Yellow Book* leads to Firbank, just as Firbank's novels lead to those of the young Aldous Huxley. This may sound a surprising judgement at first, but there is a very real continuity to be found in them which cannot be explained away solely by the misuse of the term 'Mandarin'. The continuity is in their outlook.

The phrases 'decadence' and 'fin de siècle' have labelled *The Yellow Book*, and in labelling it they have made it appear as out of date as the 'yellow-back' French novel of the last century. In fact, as Mr. Denny points out in his selector's note, the quarterly was neither decadent nor the end of anything. It was both a youthful and a vigorous attempt to make a beginning, to open up new ground—an aim which is the purpose of almost any fresh literary venture. In its thirteen volumes it can claim to have been pretty successful: its contributors included Ernest Dowson as well as Yeats, Ella D'Arcy as well as H. G. Wells, Stephen Phillips as well as John Buchan. Its editor, Henry Harland, had a taste that was catholic: in each number he figured and in some cases twice—as himself and under the pseudonym of 'The Yellow Dwarf'. In this last role, it is worth pausing to take stock of some of his contributions, for far from having dated there is much to be found in *The Yellow Book* which with salutary effect could be said of many of the present-day reviewers. One of 'The Yellow Dwarf's' onslaughts is aimed at *The Athenæum* and *The Academy*, *The Spectator* and *Saturday Review*, in which he observes how books are no longer criticized; how instead they are 'noticed', or 'praised' or 'slated'. He then goes on to examine Hall Caine's reputation and ends his comments with this footnote: 'A friend assures me that if I had pursued my wandering a little further in Mr. Hall Caine's garden of prose, I might have culled still fairer blossoms; and gives as a specimen this, from page 141: "She met him on the hill slope with a cry of joy, and kissed him. It came into his mind to draw away, but he could not, and he kissed her back." How quaint Manx customs are. In London he would almost certainly have kissed her lips.' These censures on *The Manxman* are well deserved; as critical observations they show precision and point, tempered by wit. They are indicative of much of the criticism in *The Yellow Book*.

Elsewhere one finds Hubert Crackanthorpe dissertating upon the novel, its plot and the popular mind. Unlike the musician, the painter, the sculptor and the architect, the artist in fiction enjoys no monopoly in his medium. His words and phrases and sentences, Crackanthorpe continues, are the property of everybody. Hence the public believe that all that is necessary to produce a good novel is a good plot. The rest is mere handwriting. Again Kenneth Grahame writes on the declension of the hero. At six a boy will take on a Genie, an Afreet or two, a few Sultans and two armies 'with a calmness resembling indifference'; at twelve he is satisfied if three hundred Redskins, mounted on mustangs and yelling like devils, pursue him across the prairie. Fifteen: the odds shorten: it is enough if he lay his frigate alongside of two French ships of the line and fight but one duel—with the Admiral of course; then at twenty-five it suffices that he win fame and fortune and that in the face of a whole competitive House of Lords, he marry an Earl's daughter.

Again, James Ashcroft Noble writes of the forgotten essayist and poet, Alexander Smith; and he concludes his essay thus: 'For myself, I read his essays when I was young and found them full of stimulation; I have read them again since I have become middle-aged, and have found them satisfyingly rest-giving. . . . If criticism be indeed autobiography, no verdict upon the essays of Alexander Smith could well be at once more critical or more useful than this confession. I love Mr. Stevenson and my later contemporaries; but I think I must confess that I love my early contemporary, Mr. Stevenson's countryman and forerunner, better still.'

Now these asides taken from Crackanthorpe, Grahame and Noble (all launched under Harland's ægis) are seldom remembered, because what is remembered of the 'nineties is principally a number of stock anthology pieces: extracts from Wilde's plays, a handful of Lord Alfred Douglas's sonnets or Beardsley's uncompleted fable, 'Under the Hill'. The criticism is forgotten. To-day the critical article has superseded the critical essay: style is considered largely an incidental and though it would be foolish to claim that no advance has been made on the critical method of the 'nineties, one must admit to a general loss in the grace of current critical writing. For instance, it is remarkable that so perceptive a critic as F. R. Leavis should write of sensibility in literature in so crochety a manner, giving the impression sometimes that he is walking through Arden in cloy-hoppers. One suspects, too, that the decline of the essay is bound up with this, because several potential essayists appear to have become literary journalists—notably, Desmond MacCarthy and Edwin Muir. Yet were the essay reinstated it is more than probable that it would be charged with being a schoolboy product; it would be argued that lordly language or the use of cadences or onomatopœia, by which in prose miles may be reduced to furlongs, lead to sound dictating to sense (a fair enough argument in itself). Yet this is to misunderstand style, for there exists no such thing as writing without style, since style is essentially the relationship in art between form and content. That is why the critical essay just as much as the critical article is either a direct or indirect criticism of life; it reflects a period.

Ronald Firbank's novels reflected a past period and were a criticism of life. Since his death in 1926, his novels have won a select band of devoted admirers and in small editions they have reprinted several times—the present volume including *Valmouth* (1919), *The Flower Beneath the Foot* (1923), *Prancing Nigger* (1925), *Concerning the Eccentricities of Cardinal Pirelli* (1926) and *The Artificial Princess* (1934). Yet like Maurice Baring he has received small acknowledgement in histories of twentieth century literature. Little has been written upon him, save memoirs, and most critics have been content to describe his works by saying they are as difficult to pin down as butterflies. The repetition of this verdict is becoming tiresome, and one had hoped that Sir Osbert Sitwell's introduction to this new volume might attempt the long-awaited analysis. But it does not: it is no more than a short biography, illumined with a number of anecdotes. Further, it is disappointing and none too well written. The repeated use of adjectives like 'charming', 'comic', and 'delicious' make one sigh with Hamlet; 'Words, words, words'. For a new definition of his work, therefore, one is driven back on one's own resources; and to re-read his novels is to give oneself this necessary discipline. One such impression of his characters is of having met people whose cheeks are as soft as peaches, but which once bitten would turn out to be as artificial as velvet. Another impression is of purple, mauve, violet—black, then gold—the primary colours which, like the cling of incense in a vaulted tomb, hang over his books. Yet these at the best are impressions, and account for his being christened the first impressionist in English prose; they do not describe their object save in terms of that object itself. He still remains the elusive Pimpernel of English literature.

' "There's no plot", Mrs. Asp, who seemed utterly unable for continuity, was confiding to a charmed few, "no plot exactly. It's about two women who live all alone".' (This quotation comes from the second chapter of *Vainglory*

(1915) in which, as it happens, Firbank appears as the writer, Claud Harvester, whose style is 'as charming as the top of an apple-tree above a wall'.) It is true that in the strict sense there is no plot to any of his novels, since what bored him in life he always omitted. But this is not the whole truth, because although he was primarily a satirist there is a serious note underlying all his work. In 1909 for a short time he became a Roman Catholic, and throughout every one of his books, even *Odette,* which was published in 1905, there runs a strain of religious symbolism. It is as if all the time it were acting as a twitch upon the thread, because it becomes obvious by the time one reaches his last book, *Concerning the Eccentricities of Cardinal Pirelli,* that he could not have written another novel in that same vein without one of two things happening: either overstepping the mark at which impiety becomes blasphemy and consequently bad taste, or else writing a completely different kind of book. In Huxley, who took over his heritage, one can see the results: the early wit of *Crome Yellow* (1921) gradually evaporated until after *Brave New World* (1932) nothing became sacred—*Ape and Essence* (1949) representing the culmination of the process. In this latter novel's portrayal of a form of black mass, with its Semi-chorus II chanting 'Filth infused in filth', one has a weak pastiche of Huysman's *Là-Bas;* though, if only by way of emphasis of the talent which Huxley has squandered, it would be unfair not to salvage two sentences of singular beauty from his last novel: they have a certain similarity with some of Firbank's earlier writing. Here are the two sentences in question: 'In her cheeks the dimples emerge from the long hibernation of her sorrow' and 'Delicately, like a blind man reading Herrick in Braille, he passes a finger over her cheek'.

Odette, Firbank's first published work, is one of those slight paper-covered volumes which would be by-passed had not its author at some later time met with considerable success with his other books. It is a 'Fairy Tale for weary people'. Odette, 'a young baby-child', with a tapestry of the Maid of France hanging at the end of her bed, decides that she will seek the Holy Virgin. 'She, too, like little Bernadette, would speak with the Holy Mary, the Mother of the Lord Seigneur Christ.' She leaves her room, crosses the gallery where the portraits of her ancestors peer eerily from panelled walls, passes the picture of Gabrielle d'Antravernes of the court of Louis XIV, with her 'tired, languid-looking hands full of deep red roses that lay like two dead doves upon the silver brocaded gown', and descends into the rose-garden below. There, she hears the cry of a woman. 'Could it be the Holy Mother was in pain?' Leaving the garden she finds a woman 'with painted cheeks and flaming hair' by the river-bank, and with a masterly stroke, Firbank makes the woman say ' "What are you doing here in your nightgown on the high roads? You've begun early, my dear" '. Odette stays. She comforts the woman giving her a silver cross—' "it is holy, and it is a sign that Jesus came into the world to die for us" '—until, with the breaking of the dawn, they part: the woman 'to find work—honest work', Odette to bed. Returning home Odette prays: ' "Take into Thy protection, dear Mother, this poor women who has need of Thee, and bring her safely to Thy Beautiful Kingdom in Heaven, for the sake of our Lord Jesus. Amen." '

This in brief is the plot and it recalls Francis Jammes's work. Yet it was a story to which Firbank seldom referred, always preferring to give the impression that his first published work was *Vainglory.* No reason has yet been given to account for Firbank's attitude, but a close examination of the last paragraphs of the story would seem to provide a clue. The pen-ultimate paragraph of *Odette* ends thus: '. . . suddenly she realized that life was not a dream; she realized for the first time that life was cruel, that life was sad, that beyond the beautiful garden in which she dwelt, many millions of people were struggling to live, and sometimes in the struggle for life one failed—like the poor woman by the river-bank.' But rather than close the story on this note, Firbank decided to add another paragraph; to go for a more æsthetic ending. 'And Odette turned as she walked, and looked behind her, to where by the roadside, and dying beneath the golden sun, the roses that she

had gathered for the Holy Mother, shone in the morning light like drops of crimson blood.'

The Artificial Princess was written after *Odette* and before *Vainglory*, though it was not published until 1934—and then posthumously. Firbank as yet had not achieved recognition and as Arthur Waley has said: 'Only famous people are allowed to write short books.' In fact it is worth pointing out that there is a tendency for each successive novel to become shorter, *The Artificial Princess* running to only seventy-three pages. Moreover it lends itself to an interesting literary comparison. Firbank has not been translated into Spanish (in France in 1937 *La Princesse Artificielle* was published!) and the chances of Lorca having stumbled across his works are at least a thousand to one. Yet in both writers two similar scenes occur. Firbank writes: 'I was standing at the window as she entered watching the sentinels pace to and fro; the night was so still that I could hear them swear.' Lorca in his 'Somnambulistic Ballad' sings[1]:

> The Night became as intimate
> As if it were the village square.
> The drunkards of the Civil Guard
> Banging the door, began to swear.

With Firbank the sentence reads as that of the born writer. The second clause reveals that, since its effect is to crystallize the picture and hence give it an air of reality: 'it really did happen'. With Lorca the process is different. His manner is more startling—the coupling, so obvious when once stated, of night and intimate makes an impact by its unexpectedness. Then the next two lines act as a chorus, emphasizing the quietness of the hour broken by the drunken banging. The means by which Firbank chose to startle the reader was that of another method. Like the blue cards upon which he used to compose his sentences, it was by drawing the right one out of the right drawer at the right moment: it was a case of a constant shuffling for the *bon mot*, the endless re-arranging of phrases to make the perfect sentence, and the assembling of these sentences into an ordered but quite original design. The juxtaposition was in the expression: 'Boats with crimson spouts, to wit, steamers' or, as was more often so, in the sentiments expressed: ' "O, dear God, help me. Hear me, Jesu. Hear me and forgive me and be offended not if what I ask is vain . . . soften all hostile hearts and let them love me—adore me!—O heaven, help me to please. Vouchsafe at each *finale* countless curtains; and in the 'Potion Scene', O Lord, pull me through. . . ." '

There is indeed something theatrical about Firbank's talent. Lines like, 'And fascination is really far more binding than love', are of the same calibre as those of Lady Bracknell. Yet his wittiest lines are somewhat too subtle for a general audience: unlike Congreve, with whom he has many affinities, they have the same brilliance and glitter, but their effect would not be immediate in the theatre; between their delivery and their impact the pause would be too great for them to be fully effective. Take this scene for example: ' "Whenever I go out", the King complained, "I get an impression of raised hats". It was seldom King William of Pisuerga spoke in the singular tense, and Doctor Babcock looked perturbed. "Raised hats, sir?" he murmured in impressive tones. "Nude heads, doctor." ' In a sense this is really a parody of a court circular, but it possesses dramatic qualities which are more effective read than heard: the sophistication is essentially literary rather than dramatic. For the crux of the matter is this: Firbank fell a prey to Congreve's fault, as exhibited in the latter's pleasing tale, *Incognita*: Congreve wrote there: 'When I digress, I am at that time writing to please my self: when I continue the Thread of the Story, I write to please [the reader].' That can never be so with a playwright. Which is precisely why

[1] The translation used here is that of Mary and Roy Campbell.

Firbank's play, *The Princess Zoubaroff* (1920), must be accounted a failure. It can only be enjoyed as a conversation piece.

Firbank's world was a small, but credible one: it was not his ambition to encompass the world within the two hours' traffic of the stage: he was interested in only the tiniest fragment of society—the Court and its Peers; the Church and its Bishops. However, it was because he expressed himself solely through his books (his experience of life was 'æsthetic' and his concern with 'golden moments') that in the end his talent was nearly exhausted. *Cardinal Pirelli* was the last book he could write in the *genre* which he had fashioned for himself. Yet even here, after a time, the ceaseless innuendos about high prelates and choir boys pall; and at times the comments, if not blasphemous, are in bad taste. 'The Cardinal expressed satisfaction. "Bestemia", he breathed; "and I trust they never may; for on the Feast of the Circumcision she invariably caused to be laid before the high-altar of the cathedral a peculiarly shaped loaf to the confusion of all who saw it".' This is not impudently pagan, like Gautier's *Madamoiselle de Maupin*: it is irreverent and suggests the sniggering schoolboy rather than the serious satirist. For it is a comment which must be made on Firbank's works that they present half a world which must then be quartered. The half of the world which they present (already noted) is that of the Court and its Peers, the Church and its Bishops, which in turn is viewed from a predominantly masculine angle. Indeed one is sometimes tempted to think after reading his books there are three sexes: men, women and old women, and that it is the men and the old dowagers who matter. Woman as such does not count: she is a cobra: 'You have such grace and cunning; you are like the Congo serpent,' sings Miss Sinquier. If he is writing of a masked ball in which the characters are heavily veiled he is unable to hint how the slope of a shoulder may remind a dancer of his former mistress who was equally beautiful, but who is now under the earth. Such thoughts of immortality do not occur in his writing: instead everything is shot silk, and one has in its place this kind of scene: 'Her Majesty Queen Thleeanouhee of the Land of Dates had just arrived, but seemed loath to leave the stairs, while her hostess, whom she addressed affectionately as her *dear gazelle*, remained upon them—"Let us go away by and by, my dear gazelle," she exclaimed with a primitive smile, "and remove our corsets and talk".'

So it is as one re-reads his novels one finds echoes .'Overhead the sky was so pale that it appeared to have been powdered all over with poudre de riz' occurs in *The Artificial Princess*. In *Vainglory* 'all over' becomes 'completely' and the scene takes place in Vigo Street. With these echoes in sentences, come echoes in situations; but they are limited. Too often he has to rely upon flagellations and whippings, upon ecclesiastical ritual or church scandals, for his effects: 'She was wearing an apron of parma violets and the Order of the Holy Ghost', or: 'A young nun . . . inclined to give herself married airs, since she had been debauched, one otiose noon, by a demon.' Moreover, towards the end of his life his situations became more and more absurd, more and more forced; and as the world in which he lived changed, so he had to fall back more and more on his own invention. In *Cardinal Pirelli* one begins to see that invention flagging. For he could only look back to the hey-day of the Café Royal with regret. He was not interested in the working-class and, unlike his contemporaries, he had no desire to depict the slum areas of a changing England: in any case most of his contemporaries found life in the depressed areas of England crude and left it raw: their books were not works of art, but documentaries. Thus it was, despite the fact that Firbank's grandfather was one of the roughest of diamonds, he himself would shine as an immortal diamond. He wrote for patricians, not the proletariat. His century was the eighteenth century—the century of Horace Walpole and an architectural style in which alcoves abound. In one of those alcoves—sometimes sniggering, sometimes deadly serious—he found a niche for himself, kept it, and will continue to keep it. The goddesses no longer beckon. He has joined their cloud-girt company.